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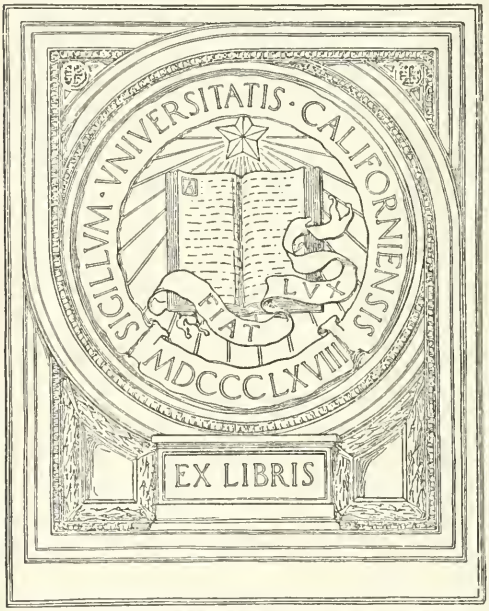

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A DREAM OF THE ORIENT

Hand-painted photogravure after the original painting by Benjamin Constant.

A TRIAL OF THE ORIENT

Hand-painted Photogravure after the original painting by
Benjamin Constant

PERSIAN AND CHINESE LETTERS

BEING THE

LETTRES PERSANES

BY

Charles Louis, Baron de

MONTESQUIEU

TRANSLATED AND INTRODUCED BY

JOHN DAVIDSON

AND

THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

BY

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

WITH A SPECIAL INTRODUCTION BY

OLIVER H. G. LEIGH

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A Dream of the Orient . . . . . *Frontispiece*

Hand-painted photogravure after the painting by Benjamin Constant

The Sword Dance 145

Photogravure after the painting by Gêrome

SPECIAL INTRODUCTION

IF EVER satire had a distinct call to duty it was during the Regency in France. The ruling class was honeycombed with corruption. The country was groaning under its monarchical afflictions. There seemed to be no hope for the people's salvation from disastrous fate. They were patient, long-suffering beasts of burden, content to be saddled, bridled, and ridden by a pestiferous breed of heartless incompetents, whose sole object in life was selfish pleasure at anyone's expense but their own. The cauldron was seething meanwhile, but did not boil over till near the century end.

This was a splendid opportunity for great souls with great courage, if any had existed. The old prophets of Israel would have made the hills echo with their ringing denunciations of wickedness in high places. Strong champions of human rights would have flashed the sword and fired the spirits of men worthy the name into triumphant vindication of the common right to fair play. But the patriotism of the period was a sorry substitute for the genuine thing. It whined and whispered when it should have shouted. It meekly accepted the *rôle* of the deaf and dumb Fenella, popping out here and there with mysterious gesticulations and enigmatical signalings, which conveyed meanings of momentous importance, or none, according as one chose to interpret them. The reformer spoke with a muzzle on his mouth, and sometimes it was a golden one.

The satirist is usually a reluctant martyr. He seeks to do good but prefers to do it by stealth and suggestion. Montesquieu was more, or less, than a satirist. A man of high education, versed in the theory and practice of law, an aristocrat of title and wealth, occupying a public position of great influence. He might have given bold utterance to his sentiments and defied officialdom. Instead, he chose the smoother path. He would poke mild fun at

the abuses of the day. To do this in his own person might not be so effective as if it purported to be the spontaneous impressions of some foreign traveler. The Oriental mind was known to be singularly penetrative, shrewd in getting at the gist of things and expressing keen judgments with a suavity which forbade the taking of offense. So Montesquieu adopted the device of a series of familiar letters exchanged by two Persian travelers in France. They were completed in 1721.

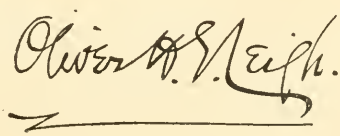
Popular taste was captivated by the wit and pleasantry of the "Letters." They gently satirized the abuses rife in church and state; society was held up to ridicule for its pet sins, and when an occasional thrust hurt too deeply, the gentle satirist administered the palliative of a droll story, to show that censors were not necessarily ascetics. Voltaire was a master in this department, as in so many others, and in pride of conscious superiority he ventured to sneer at Montesquieu's appearance as a reformer in the masque of a Persian philosopher. Anybody, said he, could have written the "Persian Letters," and straightway he betook himself to the industry of concocting his serio-comic Oriental romances.

To Montesquieu, nevertheless, belongs the honor of pioneering the movement out of which grew the philosophical dictionaries, encyclopædias, and the literary crusade against mental subjection. The quick popularity of the "Letters" alarmed the court and its minions. Less was heard of the book during several years preceding the publication of the author's next and more serious work, *Considerations sur le Grandeur et la Décadence des Romains*, which appeared in 1734. This was followed in fourteen years by the *Esprit des Lois*, the work on which Montesquieu's philosophic reputation safely rests, as his lighter fame is upheld by the "Persian Letters." Allowing for the changed times and conditions, these are still enjoyable for their literary grace and for the light they throw on frivolities and failings which have not even yet wholly vanished from the earth.

Oriental letters being a literary fad of the day, it was inevitable that Oliver Goldsmith should indulge his whim of "leaving scarcely any kind of writing untouched"; hence his series of Letters from Lien Chi Altangi, the Chinese

philosopher in London. Whether in these he justified the rest of the clause in his famous epitaph and "touched nothing that he did not adorn," each reader will decide for himself. Goldsmith had the inestimable advantage over Montesquieu of having lived, struggled, suffered, and triumphed in the every-day world. The man born to wealth and ease can at best only look at or into what the handicapped struggler actually and smartingly endures. To the Grub Street starveling in Chinese petticoats life was more real than to the rich Persian in Paris. Goldsmith was in no disguise at all when posing as a philosopher. He was never anything else, even when playing the fool with his pen to earn those earlier pittances by stirring mirth that always held the essence of tears. In picturing the lighter follies of society, he never fails to wind imperceptibly right into the core of the subject, and leaves us at the brink of profound reflectiveness on the root-causes of evils at whose superficial manifestations he has made us smile.

These Chinese letters are in the strictest sense by a wide-experienced Citizen of the World. They photograph many a quaint character whose types are as familiar to us as his originals were to Goldsmith. The living portrait gallery will fit generations yet to come. Not characters only but movements, political and social, great problems in government, art, education, and taste are mirrored and discussed with a breadth and charm not found elsewhere. Goldsmith's many-sidedness is displayed in these Letters, which are occasionally elaborated in other of his writings. Interest in each group of these Letters, Persian and Chinese, French and English, is enhanced by their juxtaposition in this volume. They are the best examples of a passing style in literature for which much could be said then, and perhaps might be said now, if equally gifted observers with equal charm of manner were to let us see ourselves as others see us.



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INTRODUCTION

I

OF ALL great French authors perhaps Montesquieu is the least known in this country. It is more than a hundred years since any work of his was translated into English, and no greater sign of the neglect which has befallen him could be instanced than the infrequency of the appearance of his name in our periodical and journalistic literature, at a time when our ideas of government are once more in the crucible. The greater fame of Voltaire and Rousseau, and the absorbing interest of the French Revolution, are the principal causes of this neglect; at the same time, had there been anything in the shape of a true biography of Montesquieu, a living picture of the man, the operation of these causes might have been in some degree obviated.

It was the custom under the *ancien régime* in the great law-families for the eldest son to compose a life of his father: a document designed to hide the actual man behind a mask of the domestic and legal virtues so effectually that his friends and colleagues should be unable to recognize him. Such a *mémoire pour servir* in the highest style of the art, Montesquieu's son prepared and published in 1755. The eulogies of D'Alembert, Maupertuis, and the Chevalier de Solignac, founded, all of them, so far as they refer to Montesquieu's life, upon this filial effigy, represent only a mask with the conventional air proper to a great and good man.

This lack of a truthful picture has, of course, had a bad effect on Montesquieu's fame in France as well as in England. Least known, until recently, as regards his life, of all the great Frenchmen of the eighteenth century, he has had perhaps the most varied fortune of all writers of that or any other age. For about fifty years after his death, his reputation was unrivaled; but from 1789 till 1814, the

alternations of feeling toward him in France were as extravagant as if he had been a living agent in the Revolution and its sequel, "now extolled to the clouds as the master of political science, as the man of genius who had rediscovered the title deeds of the human race; now denounced as *laudator temporis acti*, the apostle of privilege, and the defender of abuses." Abandoned and condemned in evil times, he has always reappeared when France has recognized its truest interests. Under the Consulate and the First Empire he is intentionally forgotten, but in 1814 he comes to the front once more. Publishers and editors were seized about that time with a "sort of fury" for the works of Montesquieu, and from 1819 till 1834 numerous annotated editions appeared. Then again there came a period of eclipse, and it was not until the close of the Second Empire that France, once more free, resumed the study of him who first tried to show it what freedom meant.

In 1875 M. Edouard Laboulaye's edition of Montesquieu's works, perhaps the best, was published in seven volumes; and in 1878 M. Louis Vian issued his *Histoire de Montesquieu*, the most important work on Montesquieu that has yet appeared. M. Vian had access to much unpublished matter; and his book, which is the result of fifteen years of study and research, supplies that biography for want of which Montesquieu's personality has hitherto been as vague as a spectre. In short, they seem at last in France in a fair way to get something like the true focus of Montesquieu, to have him placed in his proper niche: to understand him, even to label him, for he is not one of the very greatest whom it is criminal, and indeed impossible, to docket and define until one can look at them through the thought of many generations.

It is from M. Vian's biography that the material for this introduction is mainly drawn. The writer is also indebted to M. Albert Sorel's monograph on Montesquieu, and to the prefaces of M. Laboulaye. For the translation, the editions used were those of M. Laboulaye and M. Tourneux, the text of the former having been followed as a rule: the notes in both have been found very serviceable.

II

Like Montaigne, Montesquieu was a Gascon. His father, Jacques de Secondat, married Marie-Françoise de Penel, the descendant of an English family which had remained in France after the English rule had ceased there. She was an only child, and her husband received with her the title and barony of La Brède, an estate in Gascony, with a fantastic old Gothic donjon built in the thirteenth century. Montesquieu was the second of six children. The date of his birth is not known, but he was baptized on the 18th of January, 1689. His godfather, like the godfathers of Montaigne in 1553, of the lord of Beauvais in 1644, and of the Comte de Buffon in 1742, was a beggar belonging to the district chosen "in order that his godchild might remember all his life that the poor are his brothers." He was christened Charles-Louis, and bore, according to a curious custom of the time, the surname of De la Brède, the patronymic, De Secondat, being reserved for the head of the house.

His nurse was a miller's wife, and the first three years of his life were spent with her. Most of those who have written of Montesquieu have attributed his constant use of the Gascon accent, and of certain idioms and solecisms, to these three years. Is it likely, if he had not heard the Gascon accent in his father's household, and probably from his father's lips, that the effect of his lisping in a *patois* in his earliest infancy would have remained with him all his life? If, however, he heard nothing in his father's house but the best "French of Paris," his close and lasting friendship with his foster brother, Jean Demarennes, is a sufficient cause for the perpetuation of his Gasconisms. But the point is of small moment.

Montesquieu's mother died when he was seven years old, and four years after, in 1700, he was sent to the college of the Oratorian Fathers at Juilly, near Meaux, in the department of Seine-et-Marne. There he remained till 1711. He was docile and diligent, and the solid foundation laid in Juilly enabled him to become the best-informed writer

of his time in France. In the year in which he left Juilly he wrote his first non-scholastic piece — the first, at least, of which we know anything. It was a refutation, in the form of a letter, of the doctrine of the eternal damnation of idolaters: the substance of it he afterward incorporated in the "Persian Letters."*

III

On leaving college Montesquieu began to study law. It was natural, as both his grandfathers had been presidents of the Parliament of Guienne, and his uncle occupied a similar position. Methodical in all things, he studied jurisprudence according to a plan of his own, the draft of which still exists; and found plenty of time to frequent the best salons of Bordeaux, in which the rank of his family and his own reputation as a young man of talent secured him a welcome. The chief figure in Bordeaux society at that time was the Duke of Berwick,† the son of James II. and Marlborough's sister. This careful soldier and upright man, the only cool-headed and thoroughly sensible scion of the House of Stuart, perceived the merit of Montesquieu, and a friendship sprang up between them which ended only with the Duke's death. Montesquieu cherished his memory, and among his papers was found a warm and eloquent eulogy of the victor of Almanza.

In 1713 Montesquieu's father died, and his uncle, the Baron de Montesquieu, took upon himself the duties of guardian. Two months after his nephew had reached his twenty-fifth year, he caused him to be appointed a lay-councilor of the Parliament of Guienne; and a year later, on the 30th of April, 1715, Montesquieu married the girl of his uncle's choice, the Demoiselle Jeanne Lartigue, a plain-looking Calvinist, inclined to limp,‡ but frank, good natured, and with a dowry of a hundred thousand livres. Love had nothing to do with the marriage: Montesquieu's wife was his housekeeper, and the mother of his heir.

* Letter XXXV.

† Governor of Guienne, 1716–1719.

‡ See p. 29.

In the beginning of 1716 his uncle died, leaving him sole legatee on condition that he should call himself Montesquieu. Besides the name, which he had already adopted on the day of his marriage, he inherited a house in Bordeaux, lands in Agénois, and the position of *President à mortier* in the Parliament of Guienne. His installation took place in July, 1716, and he retained his presidentship till 1728.

Of the twelve provincial parliaments of France, that of Guienne, which sat at Bordeaux, ranked third with regard to the extent of its jurisdiction. It was directed by six *presidents à mortier*,* and as it possessed political, religious, administrative, and judical attributes, the proper performance of the duties of a president entailed considerable study, and were in themselves by no means light. Montesquieu is believed to have given them sufficient attention, although on his own showing,† he did not understand legal procedure; but no trace remains of his judical functions.

His official duties did not by any means occupy him exclusively. After the Academies of Caen and Paris, that of Bordeaux, having been established in 1712, is the most ancient. Three years after its constitution, Montesquieu was admitted, and became one of its most enthusiastic members. Wherever he was, and in whatever he might be engaged, he had always time to attend to its interests. More than once in acknowledgment of his many services he was appointed president. Much of the work he prepared for the Academy has been lost; of the dissertation which was considered the most remarkable, only the title remains—"The Religious Policy of the Romans." Medicine, physics, natural history, were all studied, and numerous discourses written. The effect of these studies is to be found throughout all his works, the principal definitions in *L'Esprit des Lois* itself being, not those of a lawyer or metaphysician, but rather of a geometer and naturalist.

* So called because they wore a cap of the shape of a mortar, made of black velvet, ornamented with a gold band.

† *Pensées.*

IV

In all likelihood the idea of the "Persian Letters" occurred to Montesquieu before he left college. The first of them, dated the 21st of the moon of Muharram (January), 1711, was written in his twenty-second year; the last in his thirty-second. Reflections of his favorite reading are to be found in their framework, and critics have pointed out many resemblances to Dufresney's "Amusements," "The Turkish Spy," "The Spectator," the "Decameron," with borrowings from Erasmus and other less-known writers. But Montesquieu has at least spoiled nothing that he has used. The "Letters" were printed in Amsterdam, and published anonymously in 1721; and at once, as a friend of Montesquieu's had predicted, "they sold like loaves." No French writer had ever before said so perfectly what all felt and were trying to say; and it was done so skillfully, so pleasantly, like a man telling a story after supper.

At the time they appeared the social order of the *ancien régime* was beginning to crumble about the monarchy. The revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, by exiling the Huguenots, had deprived the country of many of its most industrious subjects, and struck a disastrous blow at its trade; the power of France, built up peacefully by Mazarin and Colbert, had been shattered at Ramilies and Malplaquet; and Louis XIV.'s acceptance of the Bull *Unigenitus* directed against the Jansenists, had destroyed the last remnant of religious liberty. As for the parliaments, they were only able to mumble and grumble, endless edicts having pulled their teeth, as it were, one by one; and the condition of the people was desperate in the extreme. It is no wonder that when Louis XIV. died, the middle and lower classes thanked God with "scandalous frankness" as for a long-expected and certain deliverance. The upper classes were delighted also, although they hardly returned thanks in the same quarter, nor for the same relief. It was not a lightening of taxation, some liberty of conscience, more equal laws, that the latter anticipated, but the old license, the "unchained libertinage," the idea of

which had never disappeared, but had been handed down, as Sainte-Beuve says, in direct and uninterrupted descent from the Renaissance to the Fronde, from the Fronde to the Regency, through De Retz, Saint-Evremond, Vendome, Bayle, to the Epicureans, Pyrrhonists, professors of an imperturbable impiety, the unbelievers, as full and certain in their unbelief as Bossuet was in his faith, who made a by-word of the eight years from the death of Louis XIV. to his successor's assumption of power. Grown sanctimonious in his old age, Louis XIV. had made his subjects hypocrites. At his death the boast of vice succeeded to ostentatious devotion; the court like one man changed from Tartuffe into Don Juan. All things were discussed, examined, and torn to shreds. The intestine quarrels of the Church gave scoffers the opportunity they would have made. Dubois debauched politics; Law, finance; and the populace debauched themselves: for gaming, which had before been confined to people of quality, became the common amusement. Incest, too, was quite *à la mode;* and those who could not be in the height of the fashion had to be satisfied with lesser vices. The autocratic rule of the *Grand Monarque* gave place to the *laissez-aller* of Philip of Orleans, the "unbelieving Regent." Hope, desire, speculation, knew no bounds, all things in heaven above and in the earth beneath having become common and unclean. It is this period that is reflected and criticised in the "Persian Letters."

V

The "Persian Letters" are the correspondence of several Persians, on a visit to Europe, with each other and their friends in Ispahan. Rica, the younger of the two principal writers, is good humored, sarcastic, and represents the lighter side of Montesquieu's nature. His lively intellect makes him a keen observer; his youth and health enable him to go everywhere, see everybody, and experience everything. He describes the surface of society with a quick glance that sometimes pierces deep enough, too. The King of France, although he has no mines of gold and silver,

like the King of Spain, is much wealthier, deriving supplies from an inexhaustible source, the vanity of his subjects. He is likewise a magician, for his dominion extends to the minds of his subjects. If he has a costly war on hand, and is short of money, he simply suggests that a piece of paper is a coin of the realm, and his people are straightway convinced of it. But this is a small matter. There is a much more powerful magician, the Pope, to wit, who sometimes makes the King believe that three are no more than one; that the bread he eats is not bread, and the wine he drinks is not wine. It is Rica who makes the discovery that the Christian religion practically consists in the nonfulfillment of an immense number of tedious duties; and it is he who quotes the epitaph on the diner-out, which recalls by its numerical exactness Teufelsdröck's epitaph on Philippus Zaehdarm. "Here," it runs, "rests one who never rested before. He assisted at five hundred and thirty funerals. He made merry at the birth of two thousand six hundred and eighty children. He wished his friends joy, always varying the phrase, upon pensions amounting to two millions six hundred thousand livres; in town he walked nine thousand six hundred furlongs, in the country thirty-six furlongs. His conversation was pleasing; he had a ready-made stock of three hundred and sixty-five stories; he was acquainted also from his youth with a hundred and eighteen apophthegms derived from the ancients, which he employed on special occasions. He died at last in the sixtieth year of his age. I say no more, stranger; for how could I ever have done telling you all that he did and all that he saw."* It is Rica who sketches the alchemist in his garret, praying fatuously that God would enable him to make a good use of his wealth; the people whose conversation is a mirror which reflects only their own impertinent faces; the professional wits planning a conversation of an hour's length to consist entirely of *bonsmots;* the compilers who produce masterpieces by shifting the books in a library from one shelf to another; the universal "decider," who knew more about Ispahan than his Persian interlocutor; the French Academy, a body with

* Letter LXXXVIII.

forty heads, all of them chokeful of tropes, metaphors, and antitheses; the geometer, a martyr to his own accuracy, who was offended by a witty remark, as weak eyes are annoyed by too strong a light; the quidnuncs, *petits-maîtres*, lazy magistrates, financiers, bankrupts, and opera dancers.

Usbek is older, graver, given to meditation and reflection. Although from his earliest youth a courtier, he has remained uncorrupted. As he could not flatter, his sincerity made him enemies, and brought upon him the jealousy of the ministers. His life being in danger, he forsook the court, and retired to his country-house. Even there persecution followed him, and he determined on the journey to Europe. Rica went as his companion.

The opening paragraph of Letter XLVIII., in which Usbek characterizes himself, is undoubtedly descriptive of Montesquieu. "Although I am not employed in any business of importance, I am yet constantly occupied. I spend my time observing, and at night I write down what I have noticed, what I have seen, what I have heard during the day. I am interested in everything, astonished at everything: I am like a child, whose organs, still oversensitive, are vividly impressed by the merest trifles." Usbek can be as brilliant and satirical on occasion as his younger companion, but his aim is to probe to the heart of things, and he knows that truth will only reveal itself to a reverent search. To him all religions are worthy of respect, and their ministers also, for "God has chosen for Himself, in every corner of the earth, souls purer than the rest, whom He has separated from the impious world that their mortification and their fervent prayers may suspend His wrath." He thinks that the surest way to please God is to obey the laws of society, and to do our duty toward men. Every religion assumes that God loves men, since He establishes a religion for their happiness; and since He loves men we are certain of pleasing Him in loving them, too. Usbek's prayer in Letter XLVI. is not yet out of date. "Lord, I do not understand any of those discussions that are carried on without end regarding Thee: I would serve Thee according to Thy will; but each man whom I consult would have me serve Thee according to his." He insists that religion is intended for

man's happiness; and that, in order to love it and fulfill its behests, it is not necessary to hate and persecute those who are opposed to our beliefs — not necessary even to attempt to convert them. Indeed, he holds that variety of belief is beneficial to a state. A new sect is always the surest means of correcting the abuses of an old faith; and those who profess tolerated creeds usually prove more useful to their country than those who profess the established religion, because, being excluded from all honors, their endeavor to distinguish themselves by becoming wealthy improves trade and commerce. Proselytism, with its intolerance, its affliction of the consciences of others, its wars and inquisitions, is an epidemic disease which the Jews caught from the Egyptians, and which passed from them to the Christians and Mohammedans, a capricious mood which can be compared only to a total eclipse of human reason. "He who would have me change my religion is led to that, without doubt, because he would not change his own, although force were employed; and yet he finds it strange that I will not do a thing which he himself will not do, perhaps for the empire of the world."* Usbek is a sophist, but it is quite evident that he is no bigot; he even goes further than Montesquieu himself, a wit of the Regency, felt to be right; and which he praises suicide as being no more a disturbance of the order of Providence than the making a round stone square, he is rapped over the knuckles with the reminder that the preservation of the union of body and soul is the chief sign of submission to the decrees of the Creator.

Usbek has his character sketches as well as Rica. He gives a lively description of those geniuses who frequent the coffeehouses, and on quitting them believe themselves four times wittier than when they entered. The savage king sitting on his block of wood, dressed in his own skin, and inquiring of the sailors if they talked much of him in France, is an illustration of his. One letter, the forty-eighth, is quite a picture gallery. Usbek is in the country at the house of a man of some note; and he describes to his friend Rhedi various members of the company he meets.

* Letter LXXXVI.

There are vulgar farmers-general who brag of their cooks; jaunty confessors, necessities of female existence, who can cure a headache better than any medicine; poets, the grotesquest of humankind, declaring that they are born so; the old soldier, who cannot endure the thought that France has gained any battles without him; and last, but not least, the lady-killer who has a talk with Usbek. "'It is fine weather,' he said. 'Will you take a turn with me in the garden?' I replied as civilly as I could, and we went out together. 'I have come to the country,' said he, 'to please the mistress of the house, with whom I am not on the worst of terms. There is a certain woman in the world who will be rather out of humor; but what can one do? I visit the finest women in Paris; but I do not confine my attentions to one; they have plenty to do to look after me, for, between you and me, I am a sad dog.' 'In that case, sir,' said I, 'you doubtless have some office or employment which prevents you from waiting on them more assiduously?' 'No, sir; I have no other business than to provoke husbands, and drive fathers mad; I delight in alarming a woman who thinks me hers, and in bringing her within an ace of losing me. A set of us young fellows divide up Paris among us in this pursuit, and keep it wondering at everything we do.' 'From what I understand,' said I, 'you make more stir than the most valorous warrior, and are more regarded than a grave magistrate. If you were in Persia you would not enjoy all these advantages; you would be held fitter to guard our women than to please them.' The blood mounted to my face; and I believe had I gone on speaking, I could not have refrained from affronting him." Then there are casuists, great lords, men of sense and men of none, bishops, philosophers and philosophasters, all pricked off as deftly as any of Rica's acquaintances, and with less exaggeration, if with more sobriety. One brief dramatic sketch must not be omitted. Has any one failed to meet the gentleman who says, "I believe in the immortality of the soul for six months at a time; my opinions depend entirely on my bodily condition: I am a Spinozist, a Socinian, a Catholic, ungodly or devout, according to the state of my animal spirits, the quality of

my digestion, the rarity or heaviness of the air I breathe, the lightness or solidity of the food I eat"?*

Montesquieu has distinguished the characters of Rica and Usbek with care; and during the first months of their stay in Europe, he succeeds with fair success in depicting their state of mind in the midst of, what was to them, a new world. Soon, however, they become in all except their domestic matters merely mouthpieces for the author's satire and criticism, and expounders of his theories. It is Usbek who in several letters explains those ideas which Montesquieu afterward developed in *L'Esprit des Lois*. On this subject he writes as a legislator, with the well-balanced judgment, the restraint and reserve which always temper Montesquieu's enthusiasm and control his expressions of opinion. Here in one sentence is the policy of *L'Esprit des Lois:* "I have often inquired which form of government is most comformable to reason. It seems to me that the most perfect is that which obtains its object with the least friction; so that the government which leads men by following their propensities and inclinations is the most perfect."† And in the following has been detected the philosophy of Montesquieu's great book: "Nature always works tardily, and, as it were, thriftily; her operations are never violent; even in her productions she requires temperance; she never works but by rule and measure; if she be hurried she soon falls into decline."‡ In fact, the latter portion of the "Persian Letters" is edited from Montesquieu's commonplace book. It reveals his ideas on international law, on the advancement of science, and on the origin of liberty; and states those problems which were to be the study of his life.

From the travels of Chardin and Tavernier, Montesquieu derived his knowledge of Persia. To Chardin he is particularly indebted, not only for the background, but for his theory of despotism§ and his theory of climates.‖ The story of the revolt of Usbek's harem, though belonging to a style long out of fashion, is skillfully told, and will be

* Letter LXXV.
† Letter LXXXI.
‡ Letter CXV.
§ Letters CIII., CIV.
‖ Letter CXXII.

found to interest the most prudish reader in spite of some disgust. The forsaken wives, and long-winded pedantic eunuchs, are all French, of course, French people of the Regency; and Usbek himself is as jealous as a *petit-maître*. As for the story of Anais, and the sexual love of brother and sister in "Apheridon and Astarte," all that need be said of them is that they are characteristic of the mood of the Regency. The translator gave a passing thought to the propriety of omitting the former; but the author did not omit it, so it appears. One word more on this subject, and it shall be a word from Montesquieu himself. He found his daughter one day with the "Persian Letters" in her hand. "Let it alone, my child," he said. "It is a work of my youth unsuited to yours."

VI

Soon after the publication of the "Persian Letters" Montesquieu went to the capital to enjoy his reputation. There he found society more agreeable in Paris than in Versailles, because in the small world of the latter intrigue was the rule, whereas in the former people amused themselves. He became a member of the informal *Club de l'Entre-sol*, which met on Saturdays in the house of President Hénault. Bolingbroke was the founder of this club, and its most distinguished member. Among those who frequented it were the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, D'Argenson, "secretary to the Republic of Plato," and Ramsai. Probably the principal benefit which Montesquieu derived from his attendance at the *Entresol* was his introduction to Lord Chesterfield; but he continued a member until Cardinal Fleury interdicted the club in 1730, on account of the active part it began to take in politics.

With the aid of Mademoiselle de Clermont Louis XIV.'s unspeakable tenth muse, Montesquieu was elected to the Academy in 1725; but his election was invalidated on account of his non-residence in Paris. He then returned to Bordeaux, sold his presidentship, acquired the necessary qualification, and, not without a questionable intrigue, was

elected in 1728 to the chair rendered vacant by the death of De Sacy, a forgotten translator.

In the spring of the same year Montesquieu set out on his travels with a nephew of the Duke of Berwick, whose affairs called him to Vienna. It was during this journey that he applied for nomination to some diplomatic post. In urging his claim he pointed out that he was not duller than other men; that, being of independent means, honor was the only reward he sought; that he was accustomed to society, and had toiled (*beaucoup travaillé*) to make himself capable. The powers that then were, however, elected to dispense with his services.

Montesquieu was much disappointed with his reception at the hands of the great. On his first entrance into society he had been announced as a man of genius, and had been looked on favorably by people in place; but when the success of the "Persian Letters" proved that he actually had ability, and brought him the esteem of the public, people in place began to be shy of him. It was no consolation for him to tell himself that officialdom, secretly wounded by the reputation of a celebrated man, takes vengeance by humiliating him, and that he who can endure to hear another praised must merit much praise himself.* He was deeply disappointed. In his youth he had written, "Cicero, of all the ancients, is he whom I should most wish to be like." A public career was denied him and he suffered, having set his heart on it; but he was more of an ancient Roman than Cicero, if that was his ambition; and it is surely better to be famous as the author of *L'Esprit des Lois*, than to be infamous as one of Louis XV.'s ministers.

In Italy he found Lord Chesterfield. The two men had already tested each other in the *Entre-sol*, and they were now glad to travel together. Journeying to Venice, they met Law, the creator of credit, who, having preserved his taste for speculation and a fine diamond, passed his time in staking the latter at the gaming table. Montesquieu had dealt severely with him in the "Persian Letters," but that did not prevent Law from receiving him pleasantly;

* *Pensées*

nor did the ruined financier's complaisance prevent Montesquieu from applying the lash again in *L'Esprit des Lois*.

From Venice they went to Rome. Montesquieu frequented the salon of Cardinal Polignac, the French ambassador; and the city, both ancient and modern, had its due effect. Before leaving it, he paid a visit to the Pope, Benedict XIII., who said to him, "My dear president, I wish you to carry away some souvenir of my friendship. To you and yours I grant permission to eat meat every day for the term of your natural lives." Montesquieu thanked the Pope and withdrew. Next day they brought him the dispensation with a note of charges. "The Pope," said Montesquieu, returning the papers, "is an honest man; I will not doubt his word; and I hope God has no reason to doubt it either." An answer becoming a shrewd economic Gascon.

After visiting Naples, Pisa, Florence, Turin, and the Rhine country, they arrived at The Hague, where Chesterfield was English ambassador. From The Hague they sailed to England, reaching London in November, 1729.

VII

Although Montesquieu lived in England for eighteen months, there is but little to tell of his visit. According to his custom he went everywhere, and saw, if not everybody, certainly Walpole, Pope, and Swift. Montesquieu derived immense benefit from his travels, because he was always pliant to the manners of the country in which he sojourned. "When I am in France," he said, "I swear friendship with everybody; in England, with nobody; in Italy, I do the agreeable all round; in Germany, I drink with the whole world." He found England the most useful country to visit. Germany, he thought, was made to travel in, Italy to rest in, England to think in, and France to live in.

Montesquieu left behind him a set of notes on England, from which we can gather and condense his impressions.

In London the people eat much flesh-meat, with the result that they become very stout, and collapse at forty or forty-five.

The streets of London are so bad, that it is advisable to make one's will before taking a hackney coach.

The young English noblemen are divided into two classes: those who, having been to the University, have some learning, and are consequently shamefaced and constrained; and the shameless ones who know nothing, and are the *petits-maîtres* of the nation. But the English in general are modest.

Paris is a handsome city where there are ugly corners; London is a villainous place containing some very beautiful things.

The complaints of foreigners, especially of the French, in London, are lamentable. They say that they cannot make a friend; and that their overtures are received as injuries. But how can Kinski, the Broglies, and La Vilette, with their profuse French manners, expect the English to be like them? How should the English, who do not love each other, love strangers?

I look on the King of England simply as a man who has a pretty wife, a hundred servants, a handsome equipage, and a good table. People think him fortunate; but when he is left alone, and his door closed, and he has to quarrel with his wife and his servant, and swear at his butler, he is not so much to be envied after all.

By dint of suspecting everybody, people grow hard hearted here.

There are some Scotch members of parliament who can get only two hundred pounds for their votes, and who sell them at that price.

A minister thinks only of defeating the opposition; and to that end he would sell England — the whole world.

Extraordinary things are done in England for money. The English do not even know the meaning of honor and virtue.

I do not know what will be the upshot of European emigration to Africa and the West Indies; but I am certain that England will be the first nation to be deserted by its colonies.

The English make little effort at politeness, but are never impolite.

Women in England are reserved because they see little of the men. If a foreigner speaks to them, they suspect his intentions. "'*Je ne veux pas*,' *disent-elles*, GIVE TO HIM ENCOURAGEMENT."

There is no religion in England. If religion is spoken of everybody laughs.

England is at present the freest country in the world, not excepting any republic. I call it free, because unlimited power is in the hands of the King and the Parliament. A good English citizen will therefore endeavor to protect liberty as much against the Commons as against the King.

Montesquieu's impressions of England were written on his lands as well as in his books; for when he returned to France he had his ancestral estate of La Brède laid out in the English style.

VIII

The rest of Montesquieu's life was spent at his estates in the country and at Paris.

He made great improvements in his land, and increased his revenues largely. At his death his income is said to have been sixty thousand francs. He was not ambitious to be rich; but in all that he took in hand he wished to feel and to see signs of his ability. He has been accused of parsimony, but that is one of the commonest charges the weak have to bring against the strong. Order was the law of his being, and prodigality and dissipation as repugnant to him as anything else chaotic. Indeed there was always too little chaos about Montesquieu.* He saw life steadily and saw it whole, too soon, too easily; and he took a part for the whole. But, to return, he was certainly not avaricious. His enlightened benevolence appeared in the moderate rents he charged; and there are several specific acts of generosity recorded.

* His "tranquil chaos" was what Carlyle admired most in Tennyson.

Henry Sully, an English astronomer of note, being at Bordeaux pursuing experiments in horology, received much attention at the hands of Montesquieu, then President of the Bordeaux Academy. One day Sully, reduced to his last sou, "no uncommon thing with inventors," wrote Montesquieu a brief note, "very English and very artless" — "I am in the mood to hang myself, but I don't think I should do so if I had a hundred crowns." "I send you a hundred crowns," replied Montesquieu, "don't hang yourself, and come and see me."

In the winter of 1747-48, Guienne, on account of the war with England, had been unable to import a sufficient quantity of grain. On the 7th of December, Montesquieu, being at La Brède, was told that the tenants on an estate of his fifty leagues away were almost famine stricken. He drove to the place at once with hardly a halt; summoned the *curés* of "the four villages," and while waiting for them examined the state of provisions. On their arrival he said, "Gentlemen, I beg you to assist me in procuring some help for your parishioners. You know those who are in need of corn, or of money to buy it. I wish all the grain in my barns to be distributed gratuitously. My steward will hand it out in quantities to be fixed in proportion to the needs of those who are in want of it. It is not right that any one should lack the necessaries of life on my lands as long as I have a superabundance. Gentlemen, you are good fellows. I trust to you entirely to make this distribution. You will oblige me by carrying out my intentions promptly; and by keeping the thing a secret."

Montesquieu then went away at once, to escape the thanks of his tenants. According to the friend — of a scenic turn of mind evidently — who accompanied him, wheat to the value of 6400 livres was distributed by the *curés*. To prevent the recurrence of the distress which he had so munificently relieved, Montesquieu established on his estates granaries for the poor (*greniers de charité*).

Montesquieu was, indeed, one of the best of landlords and country gentlemen. He was looked upon in France as a species of "Milord Anglais," as interested in men as in books; and he was so — in the peasants of La Brède, who

were "not learned enough to make the worse appear the better reason," as well as in the wits of Paris. His habits and manners were as simple as could be. He would go about La Brède all day long with a white cotton cap on his head and a vine-pole over his shoulder; in which guise he was, of course, mistaken more than once for a vine-dresser, and asked by those who came to offer him *les hommages de l'Europe*, if that "was the chateau of Montesquieu."* A Genevese naturalist, Trembley,† whom he had met in England, wrote to a friend, after having passed several days at La Brède in the autumn of 1752, "I cannot describe the pleasure I enjoyed during my stay. How beautiful, how charming the things I heard! What do you think of conversations which begin at one o'clock in the day and last till eleven at night? Now there was talk of the loftiest subjects; anon full-bodied laughter over some delightful story. . . . I talked much of agriculture with M. de Montesquieu. In a conversation on that subject he exclaimed:

> '*O fortunatos nimium sua si bona norint*
> *Agricolas!*'

adding, 'I have often thought of putting these words on the front of my house.'"

The Earl of Charlemont wrote requesting an audience.‡ The reply was favorable, and he and his companion, so excited were they at the prospect of seeing the great man, arrived at his house before he was up. The servant put them into the library, where "the first thing we saw was an open book lying on a table at which he had probably sat on the preceding evening: the extinguished lamp was still in position. Impatient to know the night reading of the great philosopher, we stepped at once to the volume: it was the "Elegies of Ovid," open at one of the most gallant pages. We had not recovered from our surprise, when it was increased by the entrance of the president, whose appearance and manners were entirely opposed to the idea which we had formed of him. Instead of a grave and

* Garat, *Mémoires sur le Dix-huitième Siècle.*

† Sayoux, *Le Dix-huitième Siècle à l'Etranger.*

‡ Fr. Hardy, "Memoirs of Charlemont."

austere philosopher, whose very presence would have intimidated young folk like us, the person who addressed us was a Frenchman,"—even the French philosophers are French!—"gay, polished, full of vivacity, who, after a thousand agreeable greetings, and a thousand thanks for the honor which we did him, invited us to breakfast; but" . . . in short, we went to walk instead. "At the skirt of a fine wood, cut in alleys, surrounded by a paling, and entered by a gate three feet high and fastened with a chain, 'Come on,' said he, after having searched in his pocket, 'it is not worth while waiting for the key. You can jump as well as I, I am sure, and it's not a gate like that I'm afraid of.' So saying, he ran at the gate and leapt over it as light as you like. He had noticed our embarrassment on first meeting him — for we were much moved — and so he set to work, out of pure good nature, to put us at our ease. Little by little his age and his genius disappeared so completely that the conversation became as free and easy as if we had been his equals in every respect. We spoke of the arts and sciences. He questioned us on our travels, and as I had visited the East he addressed himself particularly to me, interesting himself in the smallest details of the lands through which I had traveled. I heard him say more than once that he regretted not having seen these countries. . . . After having made the tour of his estate, laid out in the English style, we returned and were received by Madame la Baronne and her daughter. . . . The meal was simple and abundant. After dinner Montesquieu insisted that we should stay, and he kept us for three days, during which his conversation was equally amusing and instructive." This, though of the gushing order, is evidently a true picture of the man who said, "He who writes well does not write as people write, but as he writes; very often in talking badly such a one writes well." To himself may be applied what he said of Montaigne: "In most authors I see a writing man; in Montaigne, a thinking man." He was always saying, "The misfortune of certain books is the killing work one has to do in condensing what the author took so much trouble to expand."

IX

This simplicity was the great charm of the man, as it is that of the writer. He never lectures the reader, he talks with him; "he makes him assist him in his composition." In Paris he was, as in the country, as in his books, even-tempered, simple, and pleasantly merry. In the very heat of conversation he never lost his equanimity. Simple, profound, sublime, he charmed, instructed, without offense: was even more marvelous in conversation than in his works:* "and always that same energy when his hatred of despotism lighted his face."† Without bitterness, without satire, full of wit and brilliant sallies, no one could tell a better story, promptly, vividly, without premeditation.‡ And he was always more willing to listen than to talk; he learned as much from conversation as from books. The Duchess de Chaulnes said of him, "That man makes his book in society: he remembers everything that is said to him, and only talks with those who have something to tell him worth remembering." Such a man requires the company of the best brains to bring him out; with commonplace people he will be commonplace: and yet he could find wit in those who were called dull.§ It was possible, however, to bore him. On one occasion, when disputing with some portentous councilor who got warm and cried, "M. le Président, if it is not as I say, I will give you my head," he replied, coolly, "I accept; little gifts are the cement of friendship."‖ A certain young lady, *un peu galante*, annoyed him with a torrent of questions one evening. His opportunity came when she asked him in what happiness consisted. "Happiness," he replied, "means for queens, fertility; for maidens, sterility; and for those who are near you, deafness."¶ Still he delighted in the com-

* Maupertuis, *Éloge de Montesquieu.*
† Garat, *Mémoires sur le Dix-huitième Siècle.*
‡ D'Alembert, *Éloge de Montesquieu.*
§ *Pensées.*
‖ Laplace, *Pièces intéressantes et peu connues.*
¶ *Ibid.*

pany and conversation of women, and in his younger days did not object to be in their best graces. He tells us that he attached himself to such as he thought loved him, and detached himself as soon as he thought they didn't: * the manners of the Regency being somewhat different from ours.

X

The eighteenth century was in France the age of the "monstrous regiment of women." The divine right of kings, as it had done in England half a century before, resolved itself into the divine right of mistresses. One legacy bequeathed by them was the French Revolution; modern conversation was the other. In England conversation remained among men, and produced clubs; in France women invaded it, and the salon was the result: the heyday past, the Regent's mistress, the minister's mistress, opened a salon, where Montesquieu and all celebrities might meet to talk. Claudine Guérin de Tencin, saddened by the suicide of a lover and the arrival of her forty-fifth year; Madame Geoffrin, "whimsical and cross-grained," citizen's daughter, millionaire's widow, who had the excellent talent of drawing every one out in his own subject, and called her salon "a shop"; Marie de Vichy, Marquise du Deffand, whom Massillon could not convert, who was interested in nothing, and had neither temperament nor romance; and the Duchess de Chaulnes, the "intimate enemy" of Madame du Deffand, "a typical woman of the eighteenth century," delighting only in wit, *bons-mots*, and gallantry, and made piercingly sagacious by her wicked life: these and others like them kept salons, primarily for their own amusement. Earnest talk on momentous matters was the one thing forbidden. Clear analysis of questions of finance, of morality, of legislation, clear mockery of the problems of human destiny, and facile, brilliant, and winged talk, "on everything *à propos* of nothing," was the order of the day.

Madame du Deffand was Montesquieu's favorite among these. She gathered about her in her own phrase *les trom-*

* *Pensées*.

peurs, le trompés, et les trompettes — everybody connected with diplomacy, in fact. In her salon the author of *L'Esprit des Lois* learned much. "I like that woman," he said, "with all my heart; she pleases me, amuses me; it is impossible to weary in her company." It was in this society that Montesquieu "talked out" his books; and the reader should remember that it was for this society they were written.

Montesquieu was often glad to retire from the "official centres of conversation" to quieter houses, where he could be more at home, and where he could meet such marvels of the age as the two sisters of Madame de Rochefort, "the Marquise de Boufflers, who was faithful to her lover, and the Duchesse de Mirepoix, who was faithful to her husband." But of all salons he preferred that of the Duchesse d'Aiguillon. There he met the most interesting men of the day of all nationalities, attracted by the impartiality of the duchess, her abundant and original wit, her refined talk, her obliging manners, and her ability to speak four languages. Gustavus III. called her the "living journal of the court, the city, the provinces, and the Academy." But she had judgment also; and authors consulted her about their works. Montesquieu liked her for herself, and also because in her house he could meet Madame Dupré de Saint-Maur, wife of the Intendant of Bordeaux, who was "equally charming as mistress, as wife, and as friend." It was in the arms of Madame Dupré de Saint-Maur that Montesquieu died on the 10th of February, 1755, in his sixty-sixth year.

XI

Of *L'Esprit des Lois*, perhaps the greatest French book of the eighteenth century, *La Grandeur des Romains et leur décadence*, and Montesquieu's minor works, it is not necessary to speak here. It has been said that Montesquieu only wrote one book, the "Persian Letters" and the "Grandeur and Decadence of the Romans" being studies for *L'Esprit des Lois;* but with a master the sketch is as perfect a work of art as the completed picture. "Timidity"—

Montesquieu was a severe judge of himself — "timidity has been the curse of my life," he said; but his very dread of being weak — which he never was — helped to make his first work a masterpiece.

XII

Quesnay, the elder Mirabeau, Raynal, Morelly, Servan, Malesherbes, Voltaire, Beccaria, Filangieri, Blackstone, Ferguson, all descend from Montesquieu; and Gibbon found "the strong ray of philosophic light," which "broke from Scotland in our times" upon political economy, only a reflection, though with a far steadier and more concentrated force, from the scattered but brilliant sparks kindled by the genius of Montesquieu. Chateaubriand and Benjamin Constant imitated him; Talleyrand, the best servant France ever had, was his disciple. Catherine of Russia said, "His *Esprit des Lois* is the breviary of sovereigns." The men of the French Revolution swore by him. Robespierre was parodying him when he said, "The principle of democratic government is virtue; the means of its establishment, terror;" and Napoleon honored him by discarding him as an ideologist.

France never had a wiser counselor, "his blood and judgment were so well commingled;" but he could not prevent the Revolution any more than Horatio could have saved Hamlet.

JOHN DAVIDSON.

London, September, 1891.

SOME REFLECTIONS

ON

THE PERSIAN LETTERS*

NOTHING in the "Persian Letters" has been found more attractive than the unexpected discovery of a sort of story, which can be followed easily from beginning to end. A chain of circumstance connects the various characters. In proportion as their stay in Europe is extended, the morals and manners of that part of the world appear to them less wonderful and odd; and the degree in which they are affected by the marvelous and the eccentric depends upon the difference in their dispositions. On the other hand, the Asiatic seraglio† becomes more disorderly the longer Usbek remains away — that is to say, in proportion as frenzy increases and love abates.

Another cause of the success of romances of this kind lies in the fact that events are described by the characters themselves as actually happening. This produces a sensational effect unattainable in the narrative of an outsider; and it is to this that the popularity of certain works which have appeared since the publication of the "Persian Letters" is mainly due.

Although in the regular novel, digressions are inadmissible unless they themselves constitute a fresh romance, and argumentative discussion is altogether beside the mark, since the characters are not brought together for the purpose of chopping logic; yet, in the epistolary form, where accident

*These reflections first appeared as an introduction to the quarto edition of the "Persian Letters" (1754), and have always been ascribed to Montesquieu himself.

†A seraglio is a royal dwelling. Montesquieu uses the word as if it were synonymous with harem, the name of that portion of an oriental mansion in which the women are sequestrated.

selects the characters, and the subjects dealt with are independent of any design or preconceived plan, the author is enabled to mingle philosophy, politics, and morality with romance, and to connect the whole by a hidden and somewhat novel, bond.

So great was the sale of the "Persian Letters" when they came out that publishers did their utmost to obtain sequels. They buttonholed every author they met, and entreated him to write "Persian Letters."

What I have just stated, however, should convince the reader that they do not admit of a sequel,* still less of any admixture with even the cleverest "letters" from the hand of another.†

Some remarks have been found by many people sufficiently audacious; but I beg them to consider the nature of the work. The Persians, who were to play so important a part in it, found themselves suddenly in Europe, transplanted to all intents and purposes, into another world. It was therefore necessary for some time to represent them as ignorant and full of prejudices: ‡ attention was bestowed exclusively on the formation and development of their ideas. Their first thoughts must have been exceptional. It seemed to the author that all he had to do was to endow them with singularity in as spirited a manner as he could; and to this end what more was necessary than to depict their state of mind in presence of whatever appeared to them extraordinary? Nothing was further from his thoughts than the idea of compromising any principle of our religion —he did not even suspect himself of the simplest indiscretion. What questionable remarks there are on religion will always be found united with feelings of surprise and astonishment, and not with any critical intention, still less with that of censure. Why should these Persians appear better

* Probably an allusion to Lord Lyttleton's "Letters of Selim," published in English in 1735, and shortly afterward translated into French.

† A reference to the *Lettres Turques* of Sainte-Foix, which in the edition of 1740 appeared collectively with the "Persian Letters."

‡ At one time Montesquieu intended to remove what he called "certain *juvenilia*" from the "Persian Letters"; but the intention was never carried out.

informed when speaking of our religion, than when they discuss our manners and customs? And if they do sometimes find our dogmas singular, it is always a proof of their entire ignorance of the connection between those dogmas and other religious truths.

The author advances this justification out of his love for these great truths, independently of his respect for the human race, whose tenderest feelings he certainly did not intend to wound. The reader is, therefore, requested not for one moment to regard the remarks referred to as other than the result of amazement in people who could not fail to be amazed, or as the paradoxes of men who were in no condition to be paradoxical. The reader should also observe that the whole charm of the work lies in the continuous contrast between the existing state of things and the remarkable, artless, or odd manner in which they are regarded. Beyond a doubt, the nature and design of the "Persian Letters" are so obvious that they can only deceive those who are inclined to deceive themselves.

INTRODUCTION

1721

I AM not about to write a dedication, nor do I solicit protection for this work. It will be read, if it is good; and if it is bad, I am not anxious that it should be read.

I have issued these first letters in order to gauge the public taste; in my portfolio I have a goodly number more which I may hereafter publish.*

This, however, depends upon my remaining unknown: let my name once be published and I cease to write. I know a lady who walks well enough, but who limps if she is watched.† Surely the blemishes of my book are sufficient to make it needless that I should submit those of my person to the critics. Were I known, it would be said, "His book is at odds with his character; he might have employed his time to better purpose; it is not worthy of a serious man." Critics are never at a loss for such remarks, because there goes no great expense of brains to the making of them.

The Persians who wrote these letters lodged at my house, and we spent our time together: they looked upon me as a man belonging to another world, and so they concealed nothing from me. Indeed, people so far from home could hardly be said to have secrets. They showed me most of their letters, and I copied them. I also intercepted some, mortifying to Persian vanity and jealousy, which they had been particularly careful to conceal from me.

I am therefore nothing more than a translator: all my endeavor has been to adapt the work to our taste and manners. I have relieved the reader as much as possible

* Some of these letters were added in the edition of 1754.

† This lady has been identified with the author's wife.

of Asiatic phraseology, and have spared him an infinitude of sublime expressions which would have driven him wild.

Nor does my service to him end there. I have curtailed those tedious compliments of which the Orientals are as lavish as ourselves; and I have omitted a great many trifling matters which barely survive exposure to the light, and ought never to emerge from the obscurity proper to "small beer."

Had most of those who have given the world collections of letters done likewise, their works would have disappeared in the editing.

One thing has often astonished me, and that is, that these Persians seemed often to have as intimate an acquaintance as I myself with the manners and customs of our nation, an acquaintance extending to the most minute particulars and not unpossessed of many points which have escaped the observation of more than one German traveler in France. This I attribute to the long stay which they made, without taking into consideration how much easier it is for an Asiatic to become acquainted with the manners and customs of the French in one year, than it would be for a Frenchman to become acquainted with the manners and customs of the Asiatics in four, the former being as communicative as the latter are reserved.

Use and wont permits every translator, and even the most illiterate commentator, to adorn the beginning of his version, or of his parody, with a panegyric on the original, and to extol its usefulness, its merit, and its excellence. It should not be very difficult to divine why I have not done so. One very excellent reason may be given: it would simply be adding tediousness to what is in itself necessarily tedious, namely, a preface.

PERSIAN LETTERS

LETTER I

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND RUSTAN, AT ISPAHAN

WE STAYED only one day at Koum. After having said our prayers before the tomb of the virgin who brought forth twelve prophets,* we resumed our journey, and yesterday, the twenty-sixth day since our departure from Ispahan, we came to Tauris.

Rica and myself are perhaps the first Persians who have left their native country urged by the thirst for knowledge; who have abandoned the amenities of a tranquil life for the laborious search after wisdom.

Although born in a prosperous realm, we did not believe that its boundaries should limit our knowledge, and that the lore of the East should alone enlighten us.

Tell me, without flattery, what is said of our journey: I do not expect that it will be generally commended. Address your letter to Erzeroum, where I shall stay for some time. Farewell, my dear Rustan. Rest assured that in whatever part of the world I may be, you have in me a faithful friend.

TAURIS, the 15th of the moon of Saphar,† 1711.

*Fatima, daughter of Mohammed, and wife of Ali—according to the Koran, one of the four perfect women.

†More correctly *Safar*, the second month of the Persian year.

LETTER II

USBEK TO THE CHIEF BLACK EUNUCH, AT HIS SERAGLIO IN ISPAHAN

YOU are the faithful keeper of the loveliest women in Persia; I have intrusted you with what in this world is most dear to me; you bear the keys of those fatal doors which are opened only for me. While you watch over this precious storehouse of my affections, my heart, at rest, enjoys an absolute freedom from care. You guard it in the silence of the night as well as in the bustle of the day. Your unrelaxing care sustains virtue when it wavers. Should the women whom you guard incline to swerve from their duty, you would destroy their hopes in the bud. You are the scourge of vice, and the very monument of fidelity.

You command them and they obey. You fulfill implicitly all their desires, and exact from them a like obedience to the laws of the seraglio; you take a pride in rendering them the meanest services; you submit to their lawful commands with reverence and in dread; you serve them like the slave of their slaves. But, resuming your power, you command imperiously, as my representative, whenever you apprehend any slackening of the laws of chastity and modesty.

Never forget that I raised you from the lowest position among my slaves, to set you in your present place as the trusted guardian of the delights of my heart. Maintain the most humble bearing in the presence of those who partake my love; but, at the same time, make them deeply conscious of their own powerlessness. Provide for them all innocent pleasures; beguile them of their anxiety; entertain them with music, dancing, and delicious drinks; persuade them to meet together frequently. If they wish to go into the country, you may escort them thither; but lay hands on every man who dares to enter their presence. Exhort

them to that cleanliness which is the symbol of the soul's purity; speak sometimes of me. I long to see them again in that delightful place which they adorn. Farewell.

TAURIS, the 18th of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

LETTER III

ZACHI TO USBEK, AT TAURIS

WE INSTRUCTED the chief of the eunuchs to take us into the country; he will inform you that we arrived there without accident. When we had to leave our litters in order to cross the river, we went, as usual, into boxes: two slaves carried us on their shoulders, and we were seen by nobody.

Dear Usbek, how can I endure existence in your seraglio at Ispahan! It recalls everlastingly my past happiness, provoking daily my desires with renewed vehemence.

I wander from room to room, always searching for you, and never finding you; mocked at every turn by the cruel memory of my vanished bliss. Sometimes I behold you in that spot where I first received you in my arms; again I see you in the room where you decided that famous quarrel among your women. Each of us asserted a superiority in beauty. We came before you, after having exhausted our fancy in decking ourselves with jewelry and adornments. You noted with pleasure the marvels of our art; you were astonished at the height to which we had carried our desire to please you. But you soon made those borrowed graces give way to more natural charms; you destroyed the result of our labors: we were compelled to despoil ourselves of those ornaments, now become tiresome to you, and to appear before you in the simplicity of nature. For me, modesty counted as nothing; I thought only of conquest. Happy Usbek! what charms did you then behold. Long you wandered from enchantment to enchantment, unable to control your roving fancy; each new grace required your willing tribute; in an instant you covered us

all with your kisses; your eager looks strayed into the recesses of our charms; you made us vary our attitudes a thousand times; and new commands brought forth new obedience. I avow it, Usbek, a passion stronger even than ambition filled me with a desire to please you. Gradually I saw myself become your heart's mistress; you chose me, left me, returned to me, and I knew how to keep your love: my triumph was the despair of my rivals. You and I felt as if we were the sole inhabitants of the world: nothing but ourselves deserved a moment's thought. Would to Heaven my rivals had been brave enough to witness all the proofs of love you gave me! Had they watched well my transports they would have felt the difference between their love and mine; it would have been plain to them that, though they might dispute the palm of beauty, they could not vie with me in tenderness. . . . But what is this? Where has this vain rehearsal led me? It is a misfortune not to be loved, but to have love withdrawn from one is an outrage. You abandon us, Usbek, to wander in barbarous climes. What! do you count it as nothing to be loved? Alas! you do not even know what you lose! The sighs I heave there is none to hear; my falling tears you are not by to pity. Your insensibility takes you further and further from the love that throbs for you in your seraglio. Ah! my beloved Usbek, if you only knew your happiness!

THE SERAGLIO AT FATME, the 21st of the moon of Maharram,* 1711.

LETTER IV

ZEPHIS TO USBEK, AT ERZEROUM

AT LENGTH the black monster has resolved to drive me to despair. He is absolutely determined to deprive me of my slave, Zelida—Zelida, who serves me with such affection, and at whose magical touch new charms appear.

*More correctly *Muharram*, the first month of the Persian year. Zachi's letter was, therefore, written about a month before the two that precede it.

Nor is he satisfied with the pangs this separation causes me; he is bent on my dishonor. The wretch pretends to treat as criminal the motives of my confidence, and because he was weary of standing behind the door, where I always tell him to wait, he dares to imagine that he heard or saw things which my fancy cannot even conceive. I am very unhappy! Neither my isolation nor my virtue can secure me from his preposterous suspicions. A vile slave would drive me from your heart, and I am called on to defend myself even in your bosom! — But no; I am too proud to justify myself: you alone shall vouch for my behavior — your love and my love, and — need I say it, dear Usbek? — my tears.

THE SERAGLIO AT FATME, the 29th of the moon of Maharram, 1711.

LETTER V

RUSTAN TO USBEK, AT ERZEROUM

YOU are the one subject of conversation at Ispahan; nothing is talked of but your departure: some ascribe it to a giddy spirit, others to some heavy affliction; your friends are your only defenders, and they make no converts. People fail to understand why you should forsake your wives, your relations, your friends, and your native country, to visit lands of which Persians know nothing. Rica's mother is inconsolable; she wants her son again, whom, she declares, you have decoyed away. As for me, my dear Usbek, I am, of course, anxious to approve of all your actions; but I do not see how I am to pardon your absence, and, however good your reasons may be, my heart will never appreciate them.

ISPAHAN, the 28th of the first moon of Rebiab,* 1711.

* *Rabi* means "the spring" in Persian. *Rabi-ul-awal*, "the first (month) of spring," is the third of the Persian year.

LETTER VI

Usbek to his friend Nessir, at Ispahan

At the distance of a day's journey from Erivan we left Persian ground, and entered Turkish territory. Twelve days after, we reached Erzeroum, where we stayed three or four months.

I own, Nessir, I felt sorry, though I did not show it, when I lost sight of Persia and found myself among the treacherous Osmanli. It seems to me that I become more and more of a pagan the further I advance into this heathenish country.*

My fatherland, my family, and my friends came vividly before me; my affections revived; and, to crown all, an indefinable uneasiness laid hold of me, warning me that I had ventured on too great an undertaking for my peace of mind.

But that which afflicts me most is the memory of my wives. I have only to think of them to be consumed with grief.

Do not imagine that I love them: insensibility in that matter, Nessir, has left me without desires. Living with so many wives, I have forestalled love—it has indeed been its own destruction; but from this very callousness there springs a secret jealousy which devours me. I behold a band of women left almost entirely to themselves; except some low-minded wretches, no one is answerable for their conduct. I would hardly feel safe, if my slaves were faithful: how would it be if they were not so? What doleful tidings may I not receive in those far-off lands which I am about to visit! The mischief of this is, that my friends

*The Persians generally belong to the sect of Shiites, who consider Abu Bekr, Omar, and Othman, the first three successors of Mohammed, as usurpers, and regard Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of the prophet, as the first true Iman, and equal to Mohammed. The Shiites also reject as unworthy of credit the Sonna, a collection of traditions which is the canon of the faith of the Sunites, the sect to which the Turks belong.

are unable to help me; they are forbidden to inquire into the sources of my misery; and what could they do after all? I would prefer a thousand times that such faults should remain unknown because uncorrected, than that they should become notorious through some condign punishment! I unbosom myself to you, my dear Nessir: it is the only consolation left me in my misery.

ERZEROUM, the 10th of the second moon of Rebiab, 1711.

LETTER VII

FATME TO USBEK, AT ERZEROUM

YOU have been gone for two months, my dear Usbek, and I am so dejected that I cannot yet persuade myself you have been so long away. I wander through every corner of the seraglio as if you were there; I cherish that sweet delusion. What is there left to do for a woman who loves you; who has been accustomed to clasp you in her arms; whose only desire was to give you new proofs of her affection; who was born to the blessings of freedom, but became a slave through the ardor of her passion?

When I married you, my eyes had not yet seen the face of man; and you are still the only man whom I have been permitted to look on:* for I do not count as men those frightful eunuchs whose least imperfection is that they are not men. When I compare the beauty of your countenance with the deformity of theirs, I cannot forbear esteeming myself a happy woman: my imagination can conceive no more ravishing idea than the bewitching charms of your person. I pledge you my word, Usbek, that were I allowed to leave this place in which the necessity of my condition detains me; could I escape from the guards who hem me in on all sides—even if I were allowed to choose among all the men who dwell in this

*In Persia the women are confined much more closely than among the Turks or Indians.—(M.)

capital of nations — Usbek, I swear to you, I would choose none but you: there is no man else in the wide world worthy a woman's love.

Do not think that your absence has led me to neglect those charms which have endeared me to you: although I may not be seen by any one, and the ornaments with which I deck myself do not affect your happiness, I strive notwithstanding to omit no art that can arouse delight; I never go to rest until I am all perfumed with the sweetest essences. I recall that happy time when you came to my arms; a flattering dream deceives me, and shows me the dear object of my love; my fond imagination is whelmed in its desires; sometimes I think that, digusted with the trials of your journey, you are hurrying home: between waking and sleeping the night is spent in such vague dreams; I seek for you at my side, and you seem to flee from me; until at last the very fire which burns me disperses these unsubstantial joys, and I am broad awake. Then my agitation knows no bounds. . . . You will not believe me, Usbek, but it is impossible to live like this; liquid fire courses in my veins: why cannot I find words to tell you all I feel, and why do I feel so deeply what I cannot utter? In such moments, Usbek, I would give the world for a single kiss. What an unhappy woman is she who, having such passionate desires as these, is deprived of the company of him who alone can satisfy them! Abandoned to herself, with nothing to divert her, her whole live is spent in sighs and in the frenzy of a goading passion. Instead of being happy, she has not even the privilege of ministering to the happiness of another: a useless ornament of a seraglio, she is kept for her husband's credit merely, and not for his enjoyment! You men are the most cruel creatures! Delighted when we have desires that we cannot gratify, you treat us as if we had no emotions — though you would be very sorry if that were so: you imagine that our long repressed love will be quickened when we behold you. It is very difficult for a man to make himself beloved; the easiest plan is to obtain from our constitutional weakness what you dare not hope to obtain through your own merit.

Farewell, my dear Usbek, farewell. Believe that I live only to adore you: the thought of you fills my soul; and your absence, far from making me forget you, would make my love more vehement, if that were possible.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 12th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1711.

LETTER VIII

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND RUSTAN, AT ISPAHAN

I GOT your letter at Erzeroum, where I am now. I was quite certain that my departure would cause some stir, but that gives me no trouble: which would you have me obey — the petty maxims that guide my enemies, or the dictates of my own free soul?

From my earliest youth I have been a courtier; and yet I make bold to say that my heart has remained uncorrupted: indeed, I conceived the grand idea of daring to be virtuous even at court. From the moment I recognized vice, I withdrew from it; afterward, when I approached it, it was only to unmask it. I carried my veracity even to the foot of the throne, and spoke a language never heard there before; I disconcerted flattery, amazing at the same time the idol and its worshipers.

But when I saw that my sincerity had made me enemies, and had brought upon me the jealousy of the ministers, without attracting the favor of the prince, I determined to forsake a corrupt court in which my unseconded virtue could no longer maintain me. I feigned a mighty interest in science; and, by dint of pretending, soon became really attached to it. I ceased to be a man of affairs, and retired to a house in the country. But even here persecution followed me; the malice of my enemies almost deprived me of the means of protecting myself. Information received in secret led me to consider my position seriously: I resolved to leave my native land, and my withdrawal from court

supplied a plausible excuse. I waited on the king; I emphasized the great desire I had to acquaint myself with the sciences of the west, and hinted that my travels might even be of service to him. I found favor in the king's sight; I set out, and snatched from my enemies their expected victim.

Here, Rustan, you have the true motive of my journey. Let them talk in Ispahan; say nothing in my defense except to my friends. Leave the evil-disposed to their misconstructions; I would be too happy if that were the only harm they could do me.

They discuss me at present; perhaps I shall soon be forgotten, and my friends. . . . But, no, I will not, Rustan, resign myself to these sad thoughts: I will always be dear to them; I rely upon their faithfulness as upon yours.

ERZEROUM, the 20th of the second moon of Gemmandi* 1711.

LETTER IX

THE CHIEF EUNUCH TO IBBI,† AT ERZEROUM

YOU follow your old master on his travels; you wander through provinces and kingdoms; no grief can make any impression on you; you see new sights all day long; everything you behold entertains you, and you are unconscious of the flight of time.

It is not so with me. Shut up in a hideous prison, I am always surrounded by the same objects; there is no change even in what vexes me. Weighed down by fifty years of care and annoyance, I lament my wretched case: all my life long I have never passed a single untroubled day, or known a peaceful moment.

* The two *Gemmadis*, or *Gemalis*, are the fifth and sixth months of the Persian year. *Gemal-i-ul-awal* is the first of these.

† This is the only letter TO Ibbi, and there is only one FROM him, the XXXIX. He must not be confounded with Ibben, to whom many letters are addressed.

When my first master formed the cruel design of intrusting his wives to my care, and induced me by flattering promises, supplemented by a thousand threats, to separate myself forever from my manhood, tired of the toilsome service in which I was engaged, I calculated that the sacrifice of my passions would be more than repaid by ease and wealth. How unfortunate was I! Preoccupied with the thought of the ills I would escape, I had no idea of the others to which I fled: I expected that the inability to satisfy love would secure me from its assaults. Alas! although passion had been rendered inefficient, its force remained unabated; and, far from being relieved, I found myself surrounded by objects which continually whetted my desires. When I entered the seraglio, where everything filled me with regret for what I had lost, my agitation increased each moment; a thousand natural charms seemed to unfold themselves to my sight only to tantalize me; and to crown my misery, I had constantly before me their fortunate possessor. While this wretched time lasted, I never led a woman to my master's bed without feeling wild rage in my heart, and despair unutterable in my soul.

And thus I passed my miserable youth, with no confidant but my own bosom. Wearied with longing and sad as night, there was nothing left but to endure in silence. I was forced to turn the sternest glances on those very women whom I would fain have regarded with looks of love. It would have undone me had they read my thoughts: how they would have tyrannized over me! I remember one day, as I attended a lady at the bath, I was so carried away that I lost command of myself, and dared to lay my hand where I should not. My first thought was that my last day had come. I was, however, fortunate enough to escape a dreadful death; but the fair one, whom I had made the witness of my weakness, extorted a heavy price for her silence: I entirely lost command of her, and she forced me, each time at the risk of my life, to comply with a thousand caprices.

At length, the fire of youth burnt out, I grow old and become, in that particular, at peace with myself. Women I regard with indifference, I pay them back for all their

contempt, and all the torments which I suffered through them. I never forget that I was born to command them, and in the exercise of my authority I feel as if I had recovered my lost manhood. I hate women now that I can regard them without passion, and detect and discuss all their weaknesses. Although I guard them for another, I experience a secret joy in making myself obeyed. When I take all their pleasures from them, I feel as if it were at my behest alone; and that always gives me satisfaction more or less direct. The seraglio is my empire; and my ambition, the only passion left me, finds no small gratification. I mark with pleasure that all depends on me, and that my presence is required at all times: I willingly incur the hatred of all these women, because that establishes me more firmly in my post. And they do not hate me for nothing, I can tell you: I interfere with their most innocent pleasures; I am always in the way, an insurmountable obstacle; before they know where they are they find their schemes frustrated; I am armed with refusals, I bristle with scruples; not a word is heard from me but duty, virtue, chastity, modesty. I make them desperate by dinning them with the weakness of their sex, and the authority of our master. Then I lament the necessity which requires me to be so severe, and lead them to believe that my only motives are their truest interest and my profound attachment to them.

Do not suppose that in my turn I have not to suffer endless unpleasantness. Every day these women seek occasions to repay me with interest, and their reprisals* are often terrible. Between us there goes on a constant interchange of ascendancy and obedience. They are always putting me upon the meanest services; they affect a sublime contempt; and, regardless of my age, they force me to rise ten times during the night for the merest trifle. I am worn off my feet with endless commissions, orders, employments, and caprices; one would think that they take turn about

* *Revers* in the original. M. Laboulaye asserts that Montesquieu is the only writer who uses *revers* in the sense of *revanche;* but Littré gives examples of a similar use of the word in Molière and Bossuet.

in inventing occupations for me. They often amuse themselves by making me doubly vigilant; they give me imaginary confidences. Sometimes I am told that a young man has been seen prowling around the walls, or a startling noise has been heard, or some one is about to receive a letter. All this bothers me, and amuses them; they are delighted when they see me tormenting myself. Sometimes they station me behind the door, and keep me standing there night and day. They well know how to pretend to be ill, to swoon away, to be frightened out of their wits: they are never at a loss to work their will on me. When they are in this mood, implicit obedience, unquestioning compliance are my only resources: a refusal from such a man as I am would be a thing unheard of; and if I were to hesitate in obeying them, they would punish me at their discretion. I would sooner die, my dear Ibbi, than submit to such humiliation.

But this is not all. I am never for an instant sure of my master's favor; for each of his wives is an enemy who never ceases to hope for my ruin. They take advantage of certain snatches of time when I cannot be heard, when he can refuse them nothing, and when I am always in the wrong. I conduct to my master's bed women whose spite is roused against me: do you imagine that they will move a finger in my behalf, or say a single word in my favor? I have everything to fear from their tears, their sighs, their embraces, from their very pleasures; it is their time of triumph; their charms are arrayed against me: their present services obliterate in a moment all those rendered by me in the past; and nothing can plead for me with a master who is no longer himself.

Many a time I lie down high in my master's favor, and awake to find myself disgraced. The day on which they whipped me so ignominiously round the seraglio, what had I done? I leave a woman in my master's arms: when she sees him impassioned she bursts into a torrent of tears, and pours out complaints so skillfully that they become more anguished in proportion as the love she causes grows vehement. What could I do to defend myself at a crisis of that kind? When I least expected it, ruin overtook

me; I was the victim of an amorous intrigue, of a treaty sealed with sighs. Behold, dear Ibbi, the wretched plight in which I have always lived.

What happiness is yours! Your duties are confined to attendance on Usbek. It is easy for you to please him, and to retain his favor to your dying day.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the last day of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

LETTER X

Mirza to his friend Usbek, at Erzeroum

You alone could recompense me for the absence of Rica, and it is only Rica who could console me for yours. We miss you, Usbek; you were the very life of our circle. How hard it is to break away from those attachments in which both the heart and the mind are engaged!

We have great debates here; our talk turns principally on morality. We disputed yesterday whether true happiness consists in pleasure and sensual gratification, or in the practice of virtue.

I have heard you often affirm that men were made to be virtuous, and that justice is as indispensable to existence as life itself. I beg you to explain to me what you mean by this.

I have spoken of this to the mollahs,* but they exasperate me with their quotations from the Koran; for I do not consult them as a true believer, but as a man, a citizen, and the father of a family. Farewell.

Ispahan, the last day of the moon of Saphar, 1711.

* Montesquieu spells it "Mollaks." In Persia the mollah is a devotee; in Turkey, a judge.

LETTER XI

USBEK TO MIRZA, AT ISPAHAN

YOU waive your own judgment in deference to mine;* you even deign to consult me; you profess your belief in my ability to instruct you. My dear Mirza, if there is one thing which flatters me more than your good opinion of me, it is the friendship which prompts it.

In the fulfillment of the task you have prescribed me, I do not think there is any necessity for argument of an abstruse order. There are certain truths which it is not sufficient to know, but which must be realized: such are the great commonplaces of morality. Probably the following fable will affect you more than the most subtle argument:

Once upon a time there dwelt in Arabia a small tribe called Troglodites, descendants of the ancient Troglodites, who, if historians are to be believed,† were liker beasts than men. They were not, however, counterfeit presentments of the lower animals. They had not fur like bears; they did not hiss like serpents; and they did possess two eyes:‡ but they were so malicious, so brutish, that they lacked all notion of justice and equity.

A king of foreign origin reigned over them. Wishing to correct their natural wickedness, he treated them with severity; but they conspired against him, slew him, and exterminated his line.

They then assembled to appoint a governing body. After many dissensions, they elected magistrates. These had not been long in office, when they found them intolerable, and killed them also.

Freed from this new yoke, the people were swayed only by their savage instincts. Every man determined to do

*"*Essayer la mienne*," a Gascon provincialism for USER, etc. The meaning is, therefore, as above, and not "to test mine."

† Herodotus, Plutarch, Pomponius Mela, and Pliny the Elder, are the authorities for the Troglodites.

‡ Contradictions of assertions in Pomponius Mela.

what was right in his own eyes; and in attending to his own interests, the general welfare was forgotten.

This unanimous decision gave universal satisfaction. They said: "Why should I kill myself with work for those in whom I have no interest? I will only think of myself: how should the welfare of others affect me? I will provide for my own necessities; and, if these are satisfied, it is no concern of mine though all the other Troglodites live in misery."

Each man said to himself in seedtime, "I shall till no more land than will supply me with corn enough for my wants. What use have I for any more? I am not going to bother myself for nothing."

The land in this little kingdom was not all of the same quality: some of it was barren and mountainous; and other portions, lying low, were well watered. One year a drought occurred, so severe, that the uplands bore no crop at all, while those that were well watered brought forth abundantly. In consequence of this, the highlanders almost all died of hunger, because the people of the lowlands had no mercy on them, and refused to share the harvest.

The year after, the weather being very wet, the higher grounds produced extraordinary crops, while the lowlands were flooded. Again half the people were famine stricken; but the wretched sufferers found the mountaineers as hard as they themselves had been.

One of the chief men of the country had a very lovely wife. A neighbor of his fell in love with her, and carried her off. This gave rise to a bitter quarrel; and after many words and blows, the parties agreed to submit their case to the judgment of a Troglodite, who had been well esteemed during the republic. Having gone to him, they were about to argue the case before him, when he cried: "What does it matter to me whose wife she is? My land waits to be tilled; and I am not going to waste my time settling your quarrels and doing your business, when I might be attending to my own; be kind enough to leave me alone, and trouble me no more with your disputes." With that he left them, and went to work in his fields. The ravisher, who was the stronger man, swore he would sooner die than

give up the woman. The other, smarting under his neighbor's ill treatment and the unfeeling conduct of the umpire, was going home in despair, when he met a fine young woman returning from the well. Having no longer a wife of his own, he was attracted toward her; and she pleased him all the more when he learned that she was the wife of him whom he had solicited to judge his case, and who had proved so pitiless to him. He therefore seized the woman and carried her to his house.

Another man, the owner of some fairly productive ground, took great pains in its cultivation. Two of his neighbors conspired to drive him from his house, and seize his lands. They entered into a compact to oppose all who should try to oust them, and they actually succeeded for several months. One of the two, however, disgusted at having to share what might be his own exclusively, killed the other, and became sole master of the ground. But his reign was soon over: two other Troglodites attacked him, and as he was no match for them, they killed him.

Still another Troglodite, seeing some wool exposed for sale, asked the price of it. The seller argued thus with himself: "At the market price I should receive for my wool as much money as would buy two measures of corn; but I will sell it for four times that sum, and then I can buy eight measures." As the other wanted the wool, he paid the price demanded. "Many thanks," said the vendor, "I shall now buy some corn." "What," rejoined the buyer, "you want corn? I have some to sell; but the price will rather astonish you. You must know that, as there is a famine in the land, corn is extremely dear. If you return me my money, I will give you one measure of corn: I would not give you a grain more for the price, though you were to die of hunger."

Meantime a dreadful malady was ravaging the land. An able physician came from a neighboring country, and prescribed with such success that he cured all his patients. When the plague ceased, he called for his fees, but was refused by one and all. There was nothing for it but to return to his own country, which he reached worn to a skeleton by the fatigues of a long journey. Soon after he

heard that the same disease had broken out afresh among these thankless people, and with more virulence than before. This time they did not wait for him, but sent to entreat his presence. "Begone," he cried, "unrighteous men! In your souls there is a poison more deadly than that which you wish me to cure; you are unworthy to live, for you are inhuman monsters, unacquainted with the first principles of justice. I will not offend the gods who punish you by opposing their just wrath."

ERZEROUM, the 3d of the second moon of Gemmadi,* 1711.

LETTER XII

USBEK TO THE SAME, AT ISPAHAN

YOU have seen, my dear Mirza, how the Troglodites perished in their sins, the victims of their own unrighteousness. Only two families escaped the doom which befell the nation.

In that country there lived two very remarkable men, humane, just, lovers of virtue. United by their uprightness as much as by the corruption of their fellows, they regarded the general desolation with hearts from which pity expelled every other feeling; and their compassion united them in a new bond. Together they labored for their mutual benefit; no dissensions arose between them except such as may spring from the tenderest friendship. In a secluded part of the country, far removed from those who were unworthy of their companionship, they led a calm and happy life. The earth, glad to be tilled by such virtuous hands, seemed to yield her fruits of her own accord.

They loved their wives, and were beloved most tenderly. Their utmost care was given to the virtuous training of their children. They kept before their young minds the misfortunes of their countrymen, and held them up as a

* *Gemal-i-ul-sani*, the sixth month of the Persian year.

most melancholy example. Above all, they led them to see that the interest of the individual was bound up in that of the community; that to isolate oneself was to court ruin; that the cost of virtue should never be counted, nor the practice of it regarded as troublesome; and that in acting justly by others, we bestow blessings on ourselves.

They soon enjoyed the reward of virtuous parents, which consists in having children like themselves. Happy marriages increased the number of the young people who grew up under their guidance. Although the community increased, there was still but one interest; and virtue, instead of losing its force in the crowd, grew stronger by reason of more numerous examples.

It is impossible to depict the happiness of these Troglodites! So upright a people could not fail to be the special objects of divine care. They were taught to reverence the gods with the first dawning of intellect; and religion refined manners that nature had left untutored.

They established feasts in honor of the gods. Young men and maidens, decked with flowers, worshiped them with dances and rural minstrelsy. Banquets followed, in which they struck a happy mean between mirth and frugality. At these gatherings nature spoke its artless language; there the young folks learned how to make love's bargain of hearts: trembling girls blushed to find on their lips a promise which the blessing of their parents soon ratified; tender mothers delighted themselves in forecasting happy marriages.

When they visited the temple it was not to ask of the gods wealth and overflowing plenty; these fortunate Troglodites regarded such requests as unworthy of them; if they made them at all, it was not for themselves, but for their countrymen. They approached the altar only to pray for the health of their parents, for the unity of their brethren, for the love of their wives, the affection and obedience of their children. Thither the maidens came to offer up the sweet sacrifice of their hearts, asking in return only the right to make a Troglodite happy.

In the evening, when the flocks had left the fields, and the weary oxen had returned from plowing, these people

met together. During a frugal meal they sang of the crimes of the first Troglodites, and their sad fate; of the revival of virtue with a new race, and of its happiness. Then they celebrated the greatness of the gods, abounding in mercy to those who seek them, and visiting with inevitable judgments those who reverence them not. This would be followed by a description of the delights of a country life, and the happiness that springs from a state of innocence. Soon after they retired to rest, and their slumbers were unbroken by care or anxiety.

The provision of nature was sufficient for both their pleasures and their wants. A covetous man was unknown in this happy country. When they made presents, the giver always felt himself more blessed than the receiver. The whole race looked upon themselves as one single family; their flocks were almost always intermixed, and the only trouble which they usually shirked was that of separating them.

ERZEROUM, the 6th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1711.

LETTER XIII

USBEK TO THE SAME

I CANNOT say half I wish to about the virtue of the Troglodites. One of them once said, "To-morrow it is my father's turn to work in the fields; I shall rise two hours before him, and when he comes to his work he will find it all done."

Another said to himself, "I think my sister has taken a fancy for a young cousin of mine. I must talk to my father about it, and get him to arrange a marriage."*

Another, being told that robbers had carried off his herd, replied, "I am very sorry, because it contained a white heifer which I meant to offer to the gods."

* In Montesquieu's time it was not uncommon for parents of noble descent to compel their daughters to enter a convent in order that the eldest son might have greater means of display.

One was heard telling another that he was bound for the temple to return thanks to Heaven for the recovery from sickness of his brother, who was so dear to his father, and whom he himself loved so much.

This also was once said: "In a field adjoining my father's, the workers are all day long exposed to the heat of the sun. I shall plant some trees there that these poor folks may sometimes rest in their shade."

On one occasion, in a company of Troglodites, an elderly man reproached a young one with the commission of an unworthy action. "We do not think him capable of such a deed," said the young men; "but if he has been guilty, may he outlive all his family."

A Troglodite having been told that strangers had robbed his house of all his goods, replied, "If they had not been unrighteous men, I would have prayed the gods to give them a longer use of them than I have had."

Their unexampled prosperity was not regarded without envy. A neighboring nation gathered together, and on some paltry pretext determined to carry off their cattle. As soon as they heard of this, the Troglodites dispatched ambassadors, who addressed their enemies in the following terms: "What evil have the Troglodites done you? Have they carried off your wives, stolen your cattle, or ravaged your lands? No; we are just men, and fear the gods. What, then, do you require of us? Would you have wool to make clothes? Do you wish the milk of our cows, or the products of our fields? Lay down your arms, then; come with us, and we will give you all you demand. But we swear by all we hold most sacred, that if you enter our territories in enmity, we will regard you as dishonest men, and deal with you as we would with wild beasts."

This speech was received with contempt; and, believing that the Troglodites had no means of defense except their innocence, the barbarians invaded their territory in warlike array.

But the Troglodites were well prepared to defend themselves. They had placed their wives and children in their midst. Astonished they certainly were at the injustice of their enemies, but not dismayed by their number. Their

hearts burned within them with an ardor before unknown. One longed to lay down his life for his father, another for his wife and children, this one for his brothers, that one for his friends, and all for each other. When one fell in the fight, he who immediately took his place, besides fighting for the common cause, had the death of his comrade to avenge.

And so the battle raged between right and wrong. Those wretched creatures, whose sole aim was plunder, felt no shame when they were put to flight. They were forced to yield to the prowess of that virtue, whose worth they were unable to appreciate.

ERZEROUM, the 9th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1711.

LETTER XIV

USBEK TO THE SAME

AS THEIR numbers increased every day, the Troglodites thought it behooved them to elect a king. They judged it wise to confer the crown upon the justest man among them; and their thoughts turned to one, venerable by reason of his age and his long career of virtue. He, however, had refused to attend the meeting, and withdrew to his house, oppressed with grief.

When deputies were sent to him to announce his election, "The gods forbid," cried he, "that I should wrong the Troglodites by permitting them to believe that there is no man among them more just than I! You offer me the crown; and if you insist upon it absolutely, I cannot but take it. Remember, however, that I shall die of sorrow, having known the Troglodites freemen, to behold them subjected to a ruler." Having said this, he burst into a torrent of tears. "Unhappy day!" he exclaimed. "Why have I lived to see it?" Then he upbraided them. "I see," he cried, "O Troglodites, what moves you to this; uprightness becomes a burden to you. In your present condition, having no head, you are constrained in your

own despite to be virtuous; otherwise your very existence would be at stake, and you would relapse into the wretched state of your ancestors. But this seems to you too heavy a yoke; you would rather become the subjects of a king, and submit to laws of his framing — laws less exacting than your present customs. You know that then you would be able to satisfy your ambition, and while away the time in slothful luxury; and that, provided you avoided the graver crimes, there would be no necessity for virtue." He ceased speaking for a little, and his tears fell faster than ever. "And what do you expect of me? How can I lay commands upon a Troglodite? Would one act more nobly because I ordered him? You forget that a Troglodite without any command does what is right from natural inclination?

"O Troglodites, my days are nearly done, my blood is frozen in my veins, I shall soon join your blessed ancestors; why would you have me carry them the sad news that you have submitted to another law than that of virtue?"

ERZEROUM, the 10th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1711.

LETTER XV*

THE FIRST EUNUCH TO JARON, THE BLACK EUNUCH, AT ERZEROUM

MAY Heaven restore you to this country, and deliver you from all danger!

Although friendship is a bond almost unknown to me, and although I am wrapped up in myself, yet you have made me feel that I have a heart; and while I was as a bronze statue to the rest of the slaves who lived under my rule, it was with pleasure that I watched your growth from infancy.

The time came when my master threw his eyes on you. Nature had not yet whispered her secrets, when the knife

* Letter XV. is the first of those added in the edition of 1754.

separated you from her forever. I will not say whether I pitied you, or whether I was glad to see you brought into my own condition. I dried your tears and stilled your cries. I imagined that I saw you born again, issuing from a state of thraldom in which you would always have had to obey, to enter into a service in which you would exercise authority. I charged myself with your education. That severity, without which instruction is impossible, kept you long in ignorance of my love. You were dear to me, however; and I assure you that I loved you as a father loves his son, if the names of father and son can be applied to such as you and I.

Since you are to travel in countries inhabited by unbelieving Christians, it is impossible that you should escape defilement. How shall the prophet look on you with favor in the midst of so many millions of his enemies? I hope my master, on his return, will perform the pilgrimage to Mecca: you would be purified in that blessed place.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 10th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1711.

LETTER XVI

Usbek to the Mollah Mehemet Ali, Guardian of The Three Tombs* at Koum

Why, divine Mollah, do you live in the tombs? You are better fitted to dwell among the stars. Doubtless you hide yourself lest you should eclipse the sun: unlike the day-star you have no spots; but you resemble him in your cloudy concealment.

Your knowledge is more abysmal than the ocean; your intellect, keener than Zufagar,† the twin-pointed sword of

*The three tombs are those of Fatima and two votaries of her family. (See p. 31, Note.)

†Zufagar, or Zoulfegar, the name of a double-bladed sword given by Mohammed to Ali. It was treasured for many years in the palace of the califs, until one of the successors of Abdoullah II. broke it by accident while hunting. A representation of this sword still appears on the flag of the Turkish navy.

Hali. You know the secrets of the nine orders of celestial powers; you read the Koran on the breast of our holy Prophet, and when you come to an obscure passage, an angel, by his order, spreads his rapid wings, and descends from the throne to reveal to you its meaning.

I may, with your help, conduct a private correspondence with the seraphim; for, in short, O thirteenth Iman,* are you not the centre where earth and heaven meet, the point of communication between the abyss and the empyrean?

In the midst of a profane people, permit me to purify myself through you. Suffer me to turn my face toward the holy place in which you dwell; mark me off from among the wicked, as one distinguishes night from day;† aid me with your counsels; be my soul's guardian; feed me with divine knowledge; and let me humbly expose to you the wounds of my spirit. Address your inspired letters to Erzeroum, where I shall stay for a month or two.

ERZEROUM, the 11th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1711.

LETTER XVII

USBEK TO THE SAME

I AM powerless, divine Mollah, to calm my impatience; I do not know how I am to wait for your sublime answer.

I have doubts, which must be resolved; I feel that my reason has gone astray; restore it to the right path. Illumine my darkness, O source of light! Annihilate with the lightning of your divine pen the difficulties I am about to propose to you; enable me to commiserate myself, make me ashamed of the questions I ask you.

*The first twelve successors of Mohammed were the Imans, or holy men. To address any one as the "thirteenth Iman" is, therefore, a high compliment.

†In the original, "as one distinguishes at daybreak the white thread from the black." According to the Mussulmans, day begins when there is light enough to make this distinction.

Whence comes it that our lawgiver forbids the use of swine's flesh, and of all those meats which he denominates unclean? Why are we forbidden to touch a corpse, and why for the purification of our souls is this endless washing of the body ordained? To me it seems that things in themselves are neither clean nor unclean: I can conceive of no inherent quality which makes them the one or the other. The filthiness of filth consists in its offending our sight or some other sense; but in itself it is no dirtier than gold or diamonds. The idea of uncleanness, resulting from contact with a dead body, proceeds from a natural repugnance with which it fills us. If the bodies of those who do not wash offended neither the smell nor the sight, how could we tell that they were unclean? Should not, therefore, the senses, divine Mollah, be the only judges of what is clean or unclean? Yet, since the same objects do not affect all men alike, that which is agreeable to one producing disgust in another, it follows that the witness of the senses is no sure guide in this matter, unless we are permitted to decide the point, each according to his fancy, and to separate for our own behoof things that are clean from those that are not.

But would not this, reverend Mollah, confound the distinctions established by our holy Prophet, and overturn the foundations of that law which was written by angelic hands?

Erzeroum, the 20th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1711.

LETTER XVIII

Mollah Mehemet Ali, Servant of the Prophets, to Usbek, at Erzeroum

You are always propounding questions that have been laid before our holy Prophet thousands of times. Why do you not read the traditions of the doctors? Why not go to that pure fountain head of all intelligence? There you would find all your doubts resolved.

Unhappy man! Constantly troubled about earthly things, you have never looked with a single eye on those of heaven. You reverence the life of the Mollahs, but you have not the courage to embrace and follow it.

O profane ones who never enter into the secrets of the Eternal, your light is as the darkness of the pit, and the reasonings of your minds are no more than the dust which rises as you walk, when the sun is at the highest pitch of noon in the scorching month of Chahban.*

The very zenith of your understanding does not attain to the nadir of that of the least of the Imans: your vain philosophy is but as the lightning which heralds the storm and darkness: in the midst of the tempest, you are driven by the wind and tossed.

Nothing is easier than the solution of your difficulty. For that purpose it is sufficient to narrate what happened once when our holy Prophet, tempted by the Christians and pestered by the Jews, effectually silenced both parties.

The Jew, Abdias Ibesalon,† asked him why God had prohibited the eating of swine's flesh. "There is good reason for it," answered Mohammed. "The creature is unclean, and of that I will convince you." He took some earth and shaped it into the figure of a man. Then he threw it on the ground, and cried, "Arise." Immediately a man stood up, and said, "I am Japhet, the son of Noah." "Was your hair as white at your death as it is now?" asked the holy Prophet. "No," replied he, "but when you roused me I thought the day of judgment had come; and such fear laid hold of me that my hair turned white on the instant."

"Now tell me," said the messenger of God, "the whole history of Noah's ark." Japhet obeyed, and after having minutely recounted all that passed during the first months, he continued as follows: "All the excrement of the animals we cast on one side of the ark, which made it lean so much that we were all in mortal terror, especially our wives, who made a terrible outcry. Our father Noah sought divine aid, and God commanded him to take the

* More correctly, *Shaban*, the eighth month of the Persian year.

† Mohammedan tradition.—(M.)

elephant and place him with his head toward the side that was overweighted. The excrement of the huge animal was so plentiful that there came forth from it a pig." Do you wonder, Usbek, that since then we have abstained from swine's flesh, and have regarded the animal as unclean?

"But, as the pig wallowed every day among the filth, he caused such a stench in the ark that he was himself compelled to sneeze; and from his nose there dropped a rat, which began to gnaw everything that came in his way. This became so intolerable to Noah, that he once more sought God's help in prayer. God commanded him to strike the lion a heavy blow on the forehead, which made him sneeze too, and from his nose there leapt a cat." Are you yet persuaded that these animals are unclean? How does it strike you?

When, therefore, you fail to understand the reason of the uncleanness of certain things, it is because you are ignorant of much else, and have no acquaintance with what has passed between God, the angels, and men. You know not the history of eternity; you have not read the writings that were penned in heaven; what has been revealed to you is but an insignificant part of the divine library: nay, those who, like us, have approached so near that they may be said to live the heavenly life, are still in obscurity and darkness. Farewell. May Mohammed be in your heart!

KOUM, the last day of the moon of
Chahban, 1711.

LETTER XIX

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND RUSTAN, AT ISPAHAN

WE STAYED only eight days at Tocat. After a journey of thirty-five days, we are now at Smyrna.

Between Tocat and Smyrna we did not see a single place worthy the name of town. I have marked with astonishment the weakness of the empire of the

Osmanli: a diseased body, it is not supported by a plain and temperate diet, but by violent remedies, which exhaust and waste it away continually.

The pashas, who obtain office only by purchase, bankrupt when they enter their provinces, ravage them like conquered countries. The insolent militia are governed only by their own caprices. The towns are dismantled, the cities deserted, the country desolate, agriculture and commerce entirely neglected.

Impunity is the order of the day under this ruthless government. The Christians who till the land, and the Jews who collect the taxes, are exposed to a thousand outrages.

Property in land is uncertain; and consequently the desire to increase its value has diminished: neither title nor possession is of any avail against the caprice of those in power.

These barbarians have abandoned all the arts, even that of war. While the nations of Europe become more refined every day, these people remain in a state of primitive ignorance; and rarely think of employing new inventions* in war, until they have been used against them a thousand times.

They have no experience of the sea, nor skill in naval affairs. They say that a mere handful of Christians, descending from a barren† rock, terrify the Ottomans, and shake their ascendancy.

Although they are themselves unfit for commerce, it is with great reluctance that they allow the Europeans, always industrious and enterprising, to conduct their trade: they think they are conferring a favor on these strangers in permitting them to enrich themselves.

Throughout the wide stretch of country which I have crossed, Smyrna is the only town which can be regarded as rich and powerful; and Smyrna owes its prosperity to the Europeans: it is no fault of the Turks that it is not like all the others.

*That is to say, the new inventions of the European nations.

†These are, apparently, the Knights of Malta.—(M.)

Here you have, my dear Rustan, a correct idea of this empire, which will be within two centuries the scene of some conqueror's exploits.

SMYRNA, the 2d of the moon of Rhamazan,* 1711.

LETTER XX

USBEK TO HIS WIFE ZACHI, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN

YOU have offended me, Zachi; and my emotions are such as you should dread, did not my distance from you afford you time to change your conduct, and set at rest the fierce jealousy with which I am tormented.

I learn that you have been found alone with Nadir, the white eunuch, who will pay with his head for his infidelity and treachery. How could you forget yourself so far as not to feel that it is forbidden you to receive a white eunuch in your chamber, as long as you have black ones at your service? You have been careful to tell me that eunuchs are not men, and that your virtue raises you above those thoughts which an imperfect likeness might arouse. That is not enough either for you or for me: not enough for you, because you have done that which the laws of the seraglio forbid; not enough for me, inasmuch as you have robbed me of honor, in exposing yourself to the gaze—what do I say?—perhaps to the attempts of a traitor who would have defiled you by his misdeeds, and still more by his repining and his impotent despair. You will doubtless tell me that you have always been faithful. Yes, but how could you fail to be? Could you possibly deceive the vigilance of the black eunuchs, who are so amazed at the life you lead? Do you think you could force the doors that keep you from the world? You boast of a virtue which is not free; and perhaps your impure desires have robbed you

* More correctly, *Ramazan*, the ninth month of the Persian year; the Mohammedan Lent.

again and again of the merit and the worth of your vaunted fidelity.

I am persuaded that you are not guilty of all that might be laid to your charge: that the traitor did not lay his sacrilegious hands upon you; that you were not so prodigal as to expose to him the delights of his master; that, covered with your garments, you allowed at least that barrier to remain between you; that he, struck with reverent awe, cast down his eyes; and that, his hardihood forsaking him, he trembled at the prospect of the punishment he had incurred. All this granted, it is none the less true that you have failed in your duty. And, since you have done a gratuitous wrong, without accomplishing your sinful desires, what would you not do to satisfy them? Still more, what would you do if you could escape from that sacred place which seems to you a melancholy prison, but which your companions find a happy asylum against the attacks of vice, a consecrated temple where their sex loses its weakness, and becomes invincible in spite of all its natural disadvantages? What would you do if, left to yourself, you had no other defense than your love for me, which is so sadly shaken, and your duty, against which you have so unworthily sinned? How immaculate are the manners of the country in which you live! They protect you from the attempts of the vilest slaves! You ought to be grateful to me even for the constraint in which you live, since it is that alone which makes you worthy of life.

You cannot endure the chief of the eunuchs because he is forever watching your behavior, and giving you good advice. His ugliness, you say, is so horrible that you cannot look at him without suffering. As if one would place in posts of that kind, miracles of manly beauty! No; what annoys you is that you have not in his place the white eunuch who dishonors you.

But what has your chief slave done to you? He has told you that the familiarities which you have taken with the youthful Zelida were unbecoming: that is the cause of your hatred.

Duty requires me, Zachi, to be an impartial judge; I am, however, only a kind husband who seeks to find you inno-

cent. The love which I bear Roxana, my new wife, has not deprived me of the tenderness which is rightly due to you, as being not less beautiful than she. I share my love among you all; and the only advantage possessed by Roxana is that which virtue adds to beauty.

SMYRNA, the 12th of the moon of Zilcade,* 1711.

LETTER XXI

USBEK TO THE CHIEF WHITE EUNUCH

WHEN you open this letter you ought to tremble; or rather you should have trembled when you permitted the treachery of Nadir. You who, even in the dullness and frigidity of old age, may not without guilt raise your eyes toward the dread objects of my love; you, to whom it is forever forbidden to set a sacrilegious foot across the threshold of that awful place which conceals them from every eye: it is you who permit in those, for whose conduct you are responsible, liberties which you would not yourself dare to take; and do you not quake at the anticipation of the thunderbolt about to fall upon them and you?

And what are you but vile instruments whom I may destroy at my pleasure; whose existence depends upon obedience; who have been sent into the world to live under my laws, or to die when I require it; who will cease to breathe as soon as my happiness, my love, my jealousy, has no more need of your ignoble service; who, in fine, can have no other lot than submission, whose soul is my will, whose only hope begins and ends in pleasing me?

I am aware that some of my wives are very fretful under the strict laws of duty; that the constant presence of a black eunuch annoys them; that they are weary of those hideous objects, which are appointed to keep them spotless for their husband; I know it well. As for you,

* More correctly *Zilkaid*, the eleventh month of the Persian year.

who have abetted this disorder, you shall be punished in a manner to strike terror into all those who abuse my confidence.

I swear by all the prophets in heaven,* and by Hali, the greatest of them, that if you swerve from your duty, I will hold your life of no more account than that of the insects which I tread upon.

SMYRNA, the 12th of the moon of Zilcade, 1711.

LETTER XXII†

JARON TO THE FIRST EUNUCH

THE further Usbek journeys from the seraglio, the more he thinks of these devoted women: he sighs, he weeps; his grief becomes embittered, and his suspicions grow stronger. He wishes to increase the number of their guardians. He intends to send me back, with all the blacks who accompany him. It is not for himself he fears, but for that which is to him a thousand times dearer.

I return them to live under your laws, and to share your cares. Great God! what a world of things is necessary for one man's happiness!

Nature, which seems originally to have placed women in a state of dependence, afterward withdrew them from it, with the result that dissension arose between the sexes because of their mutual rights. The sexes now live in a new kind of unity: hatred is the link between women and us poor eunuchs; between women and men, love is the bond.

My brow begins to wear a constant frown. My eyes dart forth sombre glances, and joy forsakes my lips. Outwardly I appear calm; within unrest reigns. Grief will furrow my face long before the wrinkles of old age appear.

* According to the Persians there are a hundred thousand prophets (See Letter XLI.)

† The second of those added in 1754.

I should have greatly enjoyed accompanying my master in his western journey, but my will belongs to him. He wishes me to guard his wives; I shall watch over them faithfully. I know how to behave toward that sex, which, when not allowed to be vain, turns haughty, and which it is easier to break than to bend. I prostrate myself before you.

SMYRNA, the 12th of the moon of Zilcade, 1711.

LETTER XXIII

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND IBBEN, AT SMYRNA.

WE HAVE now arrived at Leghorn after a forty days' voyage. It is a new town and bears witness to the genius of the dukes of Tuscany, who, from a marshy village, have made it the most flourishing town in Italy.

The women here enjoy much liberty: they are allowed to look at men through a species of window called *jalousie:* they have permission to go out every day in the company of some old women: they wear only one veil.* Their brothers-in-law, their uncles, and their nephews, are allowed to visit them, and this hardly ever troubles their husbands.

The first sight of a Christian town is, for a Mohammedan, a wonderful spectacle. I do not mean only those things that strike the eye at once, such as the difference in the buildings, the dresses, and the chief customs: there is, even in the merest trifles, a singularity, which I feel, but cannot describe.

We set out to-morrow for Marseilles, where our sojourn will be brief. Rica's intention and mine is to get at once to Paris, the capital of the European empire. Travelers are always anxious to visit great cities, because they are a sort of common country to all strangers. Farewell. Rest assured that I shall never cease to love you.

LEGHORN, the 12th of the moon of Saphar, 1712.

* The Persian women wear four. — (M.)

LETTER XXIV

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

WE HAVE now been a month at Paris, and all the time constantly moving about. There is much to do before one can get settled, find out the people with whom one has business, and procure the many requisites which are all wanted at the same time.

Paris is quite as large as Ispahan. The houses are so high that you would swear they must be inhabited by astrologers. You can easily imagine that a city built in the air, with six or seven houses one above the other, is densely peopled; and that when everybody is abroad, there is a mighty bustle.

You will scarcely believe that during the month I have been here I have not yet seen any one walking. There is no people in the world who hold more by their vehicles than the French: they run; they fly: the slow carriages of Asia, the measured step of our camels, would put them into a state of coma. As for me, who am not made for such hurry, and who often go a-foot without changing my pace, I am sometimes as mad as a Christian; for, passing over splashing from head to foot, I cannot pardon the elbowings I meet with regularly and periodically. A man, coming up behind me, passes me, and turns me half round; then another, crossing me on the opposite side, spins me suddenly round to my first position. Before I have walked a hundred paces, I am more bruised than if I had gone ten leagues.

You must not expect from me an exhaustive account of the manners and customs of the Europeans: I have myself but a faint notion of them yet, and have hardly had time to recover from my astonishment.

The King of France* is the most powerful of European potentates. He has no mines of gold like his neighbor, the King of Spain; but he is much wealthier than that prince, because his riches are drawn from a more

* Louis XIV.

inexhaustible source, the vanity of his subjects. He has undertaken and carried on great wars, without any other supplies than those derived from the sale of titles of honor; and it is by a prodigy of human pride that his troops are paid, his towns fortified, and his fleets equipped.

Then again, the king is a great magician, for his dominion extends to the minds of his subjects; he makes them think what he wishes. If he has only a million crowns in his exchequer, and has need of two millions, he has only to persuade them that one crown is worth two, and they believe it.* If he has a costly war on hand, and is short of money, he simply suggests to his subjects that a piece of paper is coin of the realm, and they are straightway convinced of it. He has even succeeded in persuading them that his touch is a sovereign cure for all sorts of diseases, so great is the power and influence he has over their minds.

What I have told you of this prince need not astonish you: there is another magician more powerful still, who is master of the king's mind, as absolutely as the king is master of the minds of his subjects. This magician is called the Pope. Sometimes he makes the king believe that three are no more than one; that the bread which he eats is not bread; the wine which he drinks not wine; and a thousand things of a like nature.

And, to keep him in practice, and prevent him from losing the habit of belief, he gives him, now and again, as an exercise, certain articles of faith. Some two years ago he sent him a large document which he called "Constitution,"† and wished to enforce belief in all that it contained upon this prince and his subjects under heavy penalties.

* The French kings regarded money as a mere symbol, the value of which they could raise or lower at their pleasure. "Kings treat men as they do pieces of money; they give them what value they choose, and people are forced to accept them according to their currency, and not according to their true worth."—LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

† An anachronism. The date of this letter is 1712, but the Bull *Unigenitus*, which, under the name of the "Constitution," troubled France during the greater part of the eighteenth century, was not issued till 1713.

He succeeded in the case of the king,* who set the example of immediate submission; but some of his subjects revolted, and declared that they would not believe a single word of what was contained in this document. The women are the prime movers in this rebellion, which divides the court, the kingdom, and every family in the land, because the document prohibits them from reading a book which all the Christians assert is of divine origin: it is, indeed, their Koran. The women, enraged at this affront to their sex, exert all their power against the "Constitution"; and they have brought over to their side all the men who are not anxious about their privilege in the matter. And truly, the Mufti does not reason amiss. By the great Hali! he must have been instructed in the principles of our holy religion, because, since women are inferior creatures compared to us, and may not, according to our prophets, enter into Paradise, why should they meddle with a book which is only designed to teach the way thither?

Some things of a miraculous nature have been told me of the king, which I am certain will appear to you hardly credible.

It is said, that, while he was making war against such of his neighbors as had leagued against him, there were in his kingdom an infinite number of invisible foes surrounding him on all sides.† They add, that, during a thirty years' search, in spite of the indefatigable exertions of certain dervishes who are in his confidence,‡ not one of these have ever been discovered. They live with him, in his court and in his capital, among his troops, among his legislators; and yet it is believed that he will have the mortification of dying without having discovered them. They exist, as it were, in general, but not in particular: they constitute a body without members. Beyond a doubt, heaven wishes to punish this prince for his severity to the vanquished, in afflicting him with invisible enemies of a spirit and a destiny superior to his own.

*Louis XIV. submitted the more readily because he required the Pope's aid to terminate the theological quarrels which had become insufferable to him.

†The Jansenists. ‡The Jesuits.

I will continue to write you, and acquaint you with matters differing widely from the Persian character and genius. We tread, indeed, the same earth; but it seems incredible, remembering in the presence of the men of this country those of the country in which you are.

PARIS, the 4th of the second moon of Rebiab,* 1712.

LETTER XXV

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

I HAVE received a letter from your nephew, Rhedi, in which he informs me that he has left Smyrna intending to visit Italy; and that the sole object of his voyage is to improve himself, and so render himself worthier of you. I congratulate you on having a nephew who will some day be the consolation of your old age.

Rica tells me he wrote you a long letter full of details about this country. The liveliness of his intellect makes him a keen observer: I, whose mind moves slowly, am in no case to write of anything.

We often speak of you with warm affection; and are never done recalling the welcome you gave us in Smyrna, and the services your friendship rendered us daily. May you, generous Ibben, find friends everywhere as grateful and as faithful as we are!

I hope to see you soon again, and to enjoy once more those happy days which pass so pleasantly between two friends. Farewell.

PARIS, the 4th of the second moon of Rebiab, 1712.

* *Rabi-ul-sani*, the second month of spring, and fourth of the Persian year.

LETTER XXVI

USBEK TO ROXANA, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN

How happy you are, Roxana, to be in the delightful country of Persia, and not in these poisoned regions, where shame and virtue are alike unknown! How happy, indeed! In my seraglio you live as in the abode of innocence, inaccessible to the attacks of all mankind; you rejoice in the good fortune which makes it impossible for you to fall; no man has ever sullied you with a lascivious look; your father-in-law himself, even during the licence of the festivals, has never beheld your lovely mouth, for you have never neglected to conceal it with a sacred veil. Happy Roxana! In your visits to the country, eunuchs have always walked before you to deal out death to all those who dared to look at you. As for me, who received you as a gift from heaven to increase my happiness, what trouble did I not have in entering upon the possession of that treasure which you defended with such constancy! How I was mortified, during the first days of our marriage, when you withheld yourself from my sight! How impatient I was when I did see you! You refused to satisfy my eager longing; on the contrary, you increased it by the obstinate refusals of an alarmed modesty: you failed to distinguish between me and all other men from whom you always conceal yourself. Do you remember that day when I lost you among your slaves, who betrayed me, and baffled me in my search? Or that other time, when, finding your tears powerless, you employed your mother's authority to stay the eagerness of my love? Do you remember when all your resources failed, except those which your courage supplied? Seeing a dagger, you threatened to destroy a husband who loved you, if he continued to demand the sacrifice of what was dearer to you than your husband himself. Two months passed in this combat between love and modesty; and you carried your chaste scruples so far, that you did not submit even after you were conquered, but defended to

the last gasp a dying virginity. You regarded me as an enemy who had outraged you, and not as a husband who loved you. It was more than three months before you could look at me without blushing ; your bashful glance seemed to reproach me for the advantage I had taken. I did not even enjoy a quiet possession ; to the best of your ability you robbed me of your charms and graces ; and without having received the least favors, I was ravished with the greatest.

If you had been brought up in this country, you would not have been so put about. The women here have lost all reserve : they appear before the men with their faces uncovered, as if they sought their overthrow ; they watch for their glances ; they accompany them to their mosques, on their promenades, even to their rooms : the service of eunuchs is quite unknown to them. In place of that noble simplicity, that amiable modesty which reigns among you, a brute-like impudence prevails, to which one can never grow accustomed.

Yes, Roxana, were you here, you would feel yourself outraged at the dreadful ignominy in which your sex is plunged ; you would fly from this abominable land, sighing for that sweet retreat, where you find innocence and self-security, where no danger makes you afraid ; where, in short, you can love me, without fear of ever losing that love which it is your duty to feel for me.

When you heighten the brilliance of your complexion with the loveliest color, when you perfume your whole body with the most precious essences, when you clothe yourself in your most beautiful garments, when you seek to distinguish yourself from your companions by your gracefulness in the dance, and the sweetness of your song, as you gently dispute with them in beauty, in tenderness, in vivacity, I cannot imagine that you have any other aim than to please me ; and, when I see you blushing modestly as your eyes seek mine, as you wind yourself into my heart with soft and flattering words, I cannot, Roxana, suspect your love.

But what am I to think of the women of Europe? The artful composition of their complexion, the ornaments with which they deck themselves, the care they have of their

bodies, the desire to please which occupies them continually, are so many stains on their virtue and affronts to their husbands.

It is not, Roxana, that I believe they carry their encroachment on virtue as far as such conduct might be expected to lead them, or that their debauchery extends to such horrible excess as the absolute violation of their conjugal vow — a thought to make one tremble. There are very few women so abandoned as to go that length: the hearts of all of them are engraved from their birth with an impression of virtue, which education weakens but cannot destroy. Though they may be lax in the observation of the external duties which modesty requires; yet, when it is a question of the last step, their better nature revolts. And so, when we imprison you so closely, and have you watched by crowds of slaves, when we restrain your desires so forcibly lest they break beyond bounds; it is not because we fear the final deed of infidelity, but because we know that purity cannot be too immaculate, and that the slightest stain would soil it.

I pity you, Roxana. Your long-tried chastity deserves a husband who would never have left you, and who would himself have restrained those desires which without him your virtue must subdue.

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of Regeb,* 1712.

LETTER XXVII

USBEK TO NESSIR, AT ISPAHAN

WE ARE now at Paris, that proud rival of the city of the sun.†

When I left Smyrna, I commissioned my friend Ibben to forward to you a box, containing some presents for you, which you will receive along with this letter.

*More correctly, *Rejab*, the seventh month of the Persian year.

† Ispahan. — (M.)

Although I am five or six hundred leagues distant from him, we exchange news as easily as if he were at Ispahan and I at Koum. I send my letters to Marseilles, whence vessels are constantly sailing for Smyrna: from Smyrna he dispatches those destined for Persia by the Armenian caravans which start every day for Ispahan.

Rica enjoys the best of health: the strength of his constitution, his youth, and his natural gayety enable him to pass unhurt through every ordeal.

I, however, am far from well; depressed both in body and mind, I surrender myself to reflections which become daily more melancholy. My impaired health makes me long for my own land, and adds to the strangeness of this one.

But I conjure you, dear Nessir, on no account to let my wives know how depressed I am. If they love me, I would spare their tears; and if not, I have no desire to increase their frowardness.

If my eunuchs believed me in danger, if they dared to hope that a base compliance would pass unpunished, they would soon cease to be deaf to the seductive voice of that sex, which can melt rocks, and move inanimate things.

Farewell, Nessir. It is a great happiness to me that I can confide in you.

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Chahban, 1712.

LETTER XXVIII

RICA TO * * *

YESTERDAY I witnessed a most remarkable thing, although it is of daily occurrence in Paris.

In the evening, after dinner, all the people gather together and play at a sort of dramatic game, which I have heard them call comedy. The main performance takes place upon a platform which is called the theatre.* On both

* "Come on, and let us get a seat on the theatre.— On the theatre, replied my Siamese; you're joking. We are not going to perform, we come to look on.— No matter, I said, let us go and loll there. We

sides may be seen in little nooks called boxes, men and women who perform in dumb show, something after our own style in Persia.

Here you see a languishing love-sick lady; there, a more animated dame exchanges burning glances with her lover: their faces portray every passion, and express them with an eloquence, none the less fervid because it is mute. The actresses here display only half their bodies, and usually wear a modest muff to hide their arms. In the lower part of the theatre there stands a crowd of people who ridicule those who are seated on high; the latter, in their turn, laugh at those who are below.

But the most zealous and active of all are certain people whose youth enables them to support fatigue. They are obliged to appear everywhere; they move through passages known only to them, mounting with surprising agility from story to story; now above, now below, they visit every box. They dive, so to speak; are lost, and reappear; often they leave the place of performance, and carry on the game in another. And there are some who, by a miracle one would hardly have expected from the fact that they carry crutches, perform prodigies similar to those I have described. Lastly, there are the rooms where a private comedy is played. Commencing with salutations, the performers proceed to embrace each other: I am told that the slightest acquaintance gives a man a right to squeeze another to death. The place seems to inspire tenderness. Indeed, it is said that the princesses who reign here are far from cruel; and, with the exception of two or three hours during the day in which they are sufficiently hard hearted, it must be admitted that they are uniformly very tractable, their hardheartedness being a species of frenzy, which goes as easily as it comes.

All this that I have described goes on in much the same style at another place called the Opera: the sole difference being, that they speak at the one, and sing at the other. One of my friends took me the other day to a box where

shall see nothing, and hear badly; but it is the most expensive, and consequently the most honorable place."—Dufresny's *Amusements sérieux et comiques*, chap. v.

one of the principal actresses was undressing. We became so well acquainted, that next morning I received the following letter from her:

"SIR,—I, who have always been the most virtuous actress at the Opera, am yet the most miserable woman in the world. About seven or eight months ago, while I was in the box where you saw me yesterday, and in the act of dressing myself as priestess of Diana, a young Abbé broke in upon me. Undismayed by my white robe, my veil, and my frontlet, he stole from me my innocence. I have tried to persuade him of the greatness of the sacrifice I made; but he mocks me, and maintains that he found me very profane. In the meantime my pregnancy is so apparent, that I dare not show myself upon the stage; for I am, in the matter of honor, extremely delicate, and always insist that it is easier for a well-born woman to lose her virtue than her modesty. You will readily believe that the young Abbé would never have overcome such exquisite modesty, had he not given me a promise of marriage. Having such a good reason to do so, I overlooked the usual petty formalities, and began where I should have ended. But, since I am dishonored by his faithlessness, I do not wish to remain longer at the Opera, where, between you and me, they scarcely give me enough for a livelihood; because now, as I grow older, and, on the one hand, begin to lose my charms, on the other, my salary, which remains stationary, seems to grow less and less every day. I have learned from a member of your suite, that, in your country, they cannot make enough of a good dancer; and that, if I were once at Ispahan, I would quickly realize a fortune. If you would deign to take me under your protection, and carry me with you to your country, you would do yourself the credit of aiding a woman, whose virtuous behavior renders her not altogether unworthy of your good offices. I am . . ."

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of
Chalval,* 1712.

* More correctly, *Shawal*, the tenth month of the Persian year.

LETTER XXIX

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

THE Pope is the head of the Christians: an old idol, kept venerable by custom. Formerly he was feared even by princes; for he deposed them as easily as our glorious sultans depose the kings of Irimetta and Georgia. He is, however, no longer dreaded. He declares himself to be the successor of one of the first Christians, called Saint Peter: and it is certainly a rich succession; for he possesses immense treasures, and a large territory owns his sway.

The bishops are the administrators under his rule, and they exercise, as his subordinates, two very different functions. In their corporate capacity they have, like him, the right to make articles of faith. Individually, their sole duty is to dispense with the observance of these articles. For you must know that the Christian religion is burdened with an immense number of very tedious duties: and, as it is universally considered less easy to fulfill these than to have bishops who can dispense with their fulfillment, the latter method has been chosen for the benefit of the public. Thus, if any one wishes to escape the fast of Rhamazan,* or is unwilling to submit to the formalities of marriage, or wishes to break his vows, or to marry within the prescribed degrees, or even to forswear himself, all he has to do is to apply to a bishop, or to the Pope, who will at once grant a dispensation.

The bishops do not make articles of faith for their own government. There are a very great number of learned men, for the most part dervishes,† who raise new questions in religion among themselves: they are left to discuss them for a long time, and the dispute lasts until a decision terminates it.

I can also assure you that there never was a realm in which so many civil wars have broken out, as in the kingdom of Christ.

* Lent.

† Applied by Montesquieu's Persians to the friars, especially to the Jesuits.

Those who first propound some new doctrine, are immediately called heretics. Each heresy receives a name which is the rallying cry of those who support it. But no one need be a heretic against his will: he only requires to split the difference, and allege some scholastic subtlety to those who accuse him of heresy; and, whether it be intelligible or not, that renders him as pure as the snow, and he may insist upon his being called orthodox.

What I have told you holds good only in France and Germany: for I have heard it affirmed that in Spain and Portugal there are certain dervishes who do not understand raillery, and who cause men to be burned as they would burn straw. Happy the man, who, when he falls into the hands of these people, has been accustomed to finger little balls of wood* while saying his prayers, who has carried on his person two pieces of cloth attached to two ribbons,† and who has paid a visit to a province called Galicia.‡ Without that, a poor devil is in a wretched plight. Although he should swear like a Pagan that he is orthodox, they may very likely decline to admit his plea, and burn him for a heretic. Much good his scholastic subtlety will do him! They will none of it; he will be burned to ashes before they would dream of even giving him a hearing.

Other judges assume the innocence of the accused; these always deem them guilty. In dubious cases, their rule is to lean to the side of severity, apparently because they think mankind desperately wicked. And yet, when it suits them, they have such a high opinion of mankind, that they think them incapable of lying; for they accept as witnesses, mortal enemies, loose women, and people whose trade is infamous. In sentencing culprits, they pay them a little compliment. Having dressed them in brimstone shirts, they assure them that they are much grieved to see them in such sorry attire; that they are tender-hearted, abhorring bloodshed, and are quite overcome at having to condemn them. Then these heartbroken judges console themselves by confiscating to their own use all the goods of their miserable victims.

* A rosary. † A scapulary.

‡ The pilgrimage to Saint James of Compostella.

Oh, happy land, inhabited by the children of the prophets! There such woeful sights as these are unknown.* There, the holy religion which angels brought protects itself by its innate truth; it can maintain itself without recourse to violent means like these.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

LETTER XXX

RICA TO THE SAME, AT SMYRNA

THE curiosity of the people of Paris exceeds all bounds. When I arrived, they stared at me as if I had dropped from the sky: old and young, men, women, and children, were all agog to see me. If I went abroad, everybody flew to the window. If I visited the Tuileries, I was immediately surrounded by a circle of gazers, the women forming a rainbow woven of a thousand colors. When I went sight seeing, a hundred *lorgneties* were speedily leveled at me: in fact never was a man so stared at as I have been. I smiled frequently when I heard people who had never traveled beyond their own door, saying to each other, "He certainly looks very like a Persian." One thing struck me: I found my portraits everywhere — in all the shops, on every mantelpiece — so fearful were they lest they should not see enough of me.

So much distinction could not fail to be burdensome. I do not consider myself such a rare and wonderful specimen of humanity; and although I have a very good opinion of myself, I would never have dreamed that I could have disturbed the peace of a great city, where I was quite unknown. I therefore resolved to change my Persian dress for a European one, in order to see if my countenance would still strike people as wonderful. This experiment made me acquainted with my true value. Divested of everything foreign in my garb, I found myself estimated

* The Persians are the most tolerant of all the Mohammedans.— (M.)

at my proper rate. I had reason to complain of my tailor, who had made me lose so suddenly the attention and good opinion of the public; for I sank immediately into the merest nonentity. Sometimes I would be as much as an hour in a given company, without attracting the least notice, or having an opportunity given me to speak; but, if any one chanced to inform the company that I was a Persian, I soon overheard a murmur all round me, "Oh! ah! a Persian, is he? Most amazing! However can anybody be a Persian?"

PARIS, the 6th of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

LETTER XXXI

RHEDI TO USBEK, AT PARIS

I AM at present, my dear Usbek, at Venice. Although one had seen all the cities of the world, there would still be a surprise in store for him here. The sight of a town whose towers and mosques rise out of the water, and of an innumerable throng of people where one would expect to find only fish, will always excite astonishment.

But this heathenish city lacks the most precious treasure the world holds, pure water, to wit; it is impossible to accomplish a single lawful ablution. The place is held in abomination by our holy Prophet; he never beholds it from on high but with indignation. With that exception, my dear Usbek, I would be delighted to live in a town where my mind is developed every day. I am gaining an understanding of the secrets of commerce, of the affairs of princes, and of their form of government. Nor do I neglect European superstitions; I apply myself to medicine, physics, and astronomy; I study the arts: in short, I am couching my eyes of the film which covered them in my native land.

VENICE, the 16th of the moon of Chalval, 1712.

LETTER XXXII

RICA TO * * *

I WENT the other day to look through a house where a meagre provision is made for some three hundred people.* I was not long about it ; for the church and the buildings do not deserve much attention. Those who live in this establishment were quite cheerful ; many of them played at cards, or other games of which I knew nothing. As I left, one of the residents left also ; and having heard me ask the way to the Marais, the remotest district of Paris, "I am going there," said he, "and will conduct you ; follow me." He guided me wonderfully, steered me through the crowds, and protected me dexterously from carriages and coaches. We had almost arrived, when curiosity got the better of me. "My good friend," I said, "may I not know who you are?" "I am blind, sir," he answered. "What!" I cried ; "blind? Then why did you not ask the good fellow who was playing at cards with you to be our guide"? "He is blind, too," was the answer : "for four hundred years there have been three hundred blind folks in the house where you met me. But I must leave you. There is the street you want. I am going with the crowd into that church, where, I promise you, people will be less in my way than I will be in theirs."

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of
Chalval, 1712

* The almshouse of the "*Quinze-Vingts*," founded at Paris, in 1254 by Saint Louis, on his return from Palestine, for three hundred knights whose eyes had been put out by the Saracens.

LETTER XXXIII

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

WINE is so very dear in Paris, on account of the duties laid on it, that it seems as if there were an intention to fulfill the injunctions of the divine Koran, which prohibits the use of strong drink.

When I consider the disastrous effects of that liquor, I cannot help regarding it as the most baleful of nature's gifts to men. If there is one thing that has soiled the lives and the good fame of our monarchs, it has been intemperance; that is the chief and vilest source of their injustice and cruelty.

To the shame of these men it must be said, that, though the law prohibits them from using wine, they drink it to an excess which degrades them beneath the lowest of mankind. Here, however, the princes are allowed to use it, and no one has ever observed that it has caused them to do wrong. The human mind is inconsistency itself. In a drunken debauch, men break out madly against all precept; and the law, intended to make for our righteousness, often serves only to increase our guilt.

But, when I disapprove of the use of this liquor which deprives men of their reason, I do not also condemn those beverages which exhilarate the mind. The wisdom of the Orientals shows itself in their search for remedies against melancholy, which they prosecute with as much solicitude as in the case of the most dangerous maladies. When any misfortune happens to a European, his only resource is to read a philosopher called Seneca; but we Asiatics, more sensible, and better physicians in this matter, drink an infusion which cheers the heart and charms away the memory of its sufferings.

There is no greater affliction than those consolations which are drawn from the necessity of evil, the inefficacy of remedies, the inevitableness of destiny, the dispensations

of Providence, and the wretched state of mankind generally. It is mockery to think of lightening misfortune, by remembering that we are born to misery; it is much wiser to raise the mind above these reflections, to treat man as a being capable of feeling, and not as a mere reasoner.

The soul, while united to the body, is a slave under a tyrant. If the blood moves sluggishly, if our spirits are not light enough, or high enough, we fall into dejection, and grow melancholy; but, if we drink what has the power to change the disposition of our body, our soul becomes capable of receiving delightful impressions, and experiences an inward joy as its machine recovers, so to speak, life and motion.

PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Zilcade, 1713.

LETTER XXXIV

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

THE Persian women are finer than the French women; but those of France are prettier. It is as difficult not to love the former, as it is to be displeased with the latter: these attract by their tenderness and modesty, while those conquer us with their sprightly humor.

That which preserves the beauty of the women in Persia is the regular life they lead: they neither gamble, nor sit up late; they drink no wine, and are never exposed to the air. It must indeed be admitted that the life of the seraglio is more conducive to health than to happiness, it is so dull and uniform. Everything turns upon discipline and duty; the very pleasures are solemn, and mirth itself is sad; enjoyment is hardly ever tasted except as an indication of authority and dependence.

Even the men are not so cheerful in Persia as in France: one never sees that freedom of spirit, and that air of contentment, which I find here among all sorts and conditions of men.

It is still worse in Turkey. There, families may be found, in which, from father to son, no soul has laughed since the foundation of the monarchy.

This Asiatic gravity is the result of the unsocial life which people lead: they never see each other except on ceremonial occasions. Friendship, that dear solace of the heart, the sweetener of our life below, is almost unknown to them; they withdraw into their houses, where they always have the same companions; and in this way each family is, as it were, isolated.

One day, when I was discussing the subject with a young man of this country, he said, "That which offends me most among your customs is the necessity you are under of living with slaves, whose thoughts and inclinations are always subdued to the vileness of their condition. These wretched creatures, by whom you have been beset from infancy, weaken in you, and ultimately destroy, those virtuous feelings which nature implants.

"For, in short, when you have cleared your mind from prejudice, what is to be expected from an upbringing at the hands of a wretch, who makes his honor consistent with the guardianship of another's wives, and prides himself upon the most loathsome employment which society affords; whose only virtue, his fidelity, is utterly despicable, because it is prompted by envy, jealousy, and despair; who, belonging to neither sex, burns to be avenged on both, and yet submits to the tyranny of the stronger, in order that he may afflict the weaker; who, deriving from his imperfection, his ugliness, and his deformity, all the *éclat* of his position, is esteemed only because he is unworthy; who, finally, riveted forever to the gate which he guards, harder than the bolts and bars which secure it, brags of fifty years in this ignoble station, where, as the minister of his master's jealousy, he has given the reign to all his own vileness?"

PARIS, the 14th of the moon of
Zilhage,* 1713.

* More correctly, Zil Haj, the last month of the Persian year.

LETTER XXXV

USBEK TO GEMCHID, HIS COUSIN, DERVISH OF THE GLORIOUS MONASTERY OF TAURIS

WHAT is your opinion, sublime dervish, of the Christians? Do you think that at the day of judgment, like the unbelieving Turks, who are to serve the Jews for asses, they will be hurried off at the gallop into hell? I am well aware that their abode will not be with the prophets, and that the great Hali's mission was not to them. But, do you think they will be condemned to everlasting punishment because they have not been fortunate enough to find mosques in their country? Will God chastise them for failing to practice a religion which He has withheld from their knowledge? I may tell you, I have often examined these Christians; I have questioned them to find out if they had any idea about the great Hali, who was the most perfect of all men, and it is certain that they have never even heard of him.

They are not like those infidels whom our holy prophets put to the sword, because they refused to believe in the miracles of Heaven: they are like those unfortunates who lived in the darkness of idolatry, before the divine light illumined the face of our great prophet.

Besides, an examination of their religion reveals the presence of some of the rudiments of our doctrines. I have often admired the secret workings of Providence, which seems in this way to have prepared them for a general conversion. One book of their learned men, entitled "Polygamy Triumphant,"* of which I have heard, proves

*The full title of the book to which Usbek alludes is, *Polygamia, triumphatrix, id est discursus politicus de polygamia, auctore Theophilo Aletheo, cum notis Athanasii Vincentii, omnibus antipolygamis, ubique locorum, terrarum, insularum, pagorum, urbium, modeste et pie opposita.* It was printed in Holland, probably in Amsterdam, although the name of a Swedish town appears on the title-page. Had it not suited Montesquieu's purpose to refer to it, the very name of the book would now be unknown except to a few specialists, as it is dull and uninteresting.

that polygamy is enjoined upon Christians. Their baptism is an emblem of our ablutions; and their only error consists in ascribing to that first ablution an efficacy which enables them to omit all others. Their priests and friars pray, like ours, seven times a day. They hope to inherit a paradise where, by means of the resurrection of the body, they will enjoy a thousand delights. Like us also, they have appointed fasts, and times of mortification, by which they hope to move the divine clemency. They worship good angels, and are in dread of evil ones. They believe in miracles which God works by means of His servants. They recognize, as we do, their own unworthiness, and the need they have for an intercessor with God. Throughout their religion I find traces of Mohammedanism, although there is no word of Mohammed. It has been well said, that truth will break through the darkest clouds, The day is hastening when the Eternal will behold upon the earth none but true believers. Time, which devours all, will make away even with error. Men will be astonished to find themselves all under the same standard: everything, the law itself will be accomplished; and the godly will be taken from the earth, and carried to the mansions of the blest.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Zilhage, 1713.

LETTER XXXVI

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

COFFEE is very much used in Paris; there are a great many public houses where it may be had. In some of these they meet to gossip, in others to play at chess. There is one* where the coffee is prepared in such a way that it makes those who drink it witty: at least, there is not a single soul who on quitting the house does not believe himself four times wittier than when he entered it.

*The *Café Procope*, a rendezvous of the wits of the eighteenth century.

But that which shocks me most in these geniuses, is, that they are quite useless to their country, and amuse their talents with puerilities. For example, when I arrived at Paris I found them warm in dispute over the most trifling matter imaginable.* It was all about an old Greek poet, whose birthplace and time of dying no one has known for two thousand years. Both sides agreed that he was a most excellent poet: it was only a question of the degree of merit to be ascribed to him. Each wished to fix his rank; but among those apportioners of praise, some carried more weight than others. Here you have the whole dispute. It was a lively quarrel; for both sides abused each other most heartily with such gross aspersions, and such bitter raillery, that I admired the conduct of the quarrel, as much as the subject of it. "If any one," said I to myself, "were fool enough to attack, in the presence of the defenders of the Greek poet, the reputation of some honest citizen, he would surely find a warm reception; and, indeed, I believe that this extreme zeal for the reputation of the dead, would blaze up to some purpose in defense of the living. But, however that may be," added I, "God keep me from ever drawing on myself the enmity of these censors of this poet, who has not been saved from their implacable hate even after having lain two thousand years in his grave! At present they fight the air; but how would it be, if their rage were animated by the presence of an emeny?"

Those of whom I have told you dispute in the vulgar tongue; and must be distinguished from another set of disputants, who employ a barbarous language,† which seems to increase the fury and the obstinancy of the combatants. There are places ‡ where these people are to be seen struggling as in a battle, dismal and confused; they are fed upon subtleties, they live upon obscure arguments and false inferences. This profession, although one would think its followers would die of hunger, must pay in some way. A

*The quarrel regarding the relative merits of the ancients and the moderns, in which Homer was the chief subject of dispute.

†The Latin of the schools.

‡The Sorbonne and the University.

whole nation, driven from their own country,* has been seen to cross the sea and establish itself in France, carrying with it no other means of providing for the necessities of life, than a notable talent for debate. Farewell.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Zilhage, 1713.

LETTER XXXVII

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

THE King of France is old.† We have no examples in our histories of such a long reign as his. It is said that he possesses in a very high degree the faculty of making himself obeyed: he governs with equal ability his family, his court, and his kingdom: he has often been heard to say, that, of all existing governments, that of the Turks, or that of our august Sultan, pleased him best: such is his high opinion of Oriental statecraft.‡

I have studied his character, and I have found certain contradictions which I cannot reconcile. For example, he has a minister who is only eighteen years old,§ and a mistress who is fourscore;‖ he loves his religion, and yet he cannot abide those who assert that it ought to be strictly observed;¶ although he flies from the noise of cities, and is inclined to be reticent, from morning till night he is engaged in getting himself talked about; he is fond of

*An allusion to a seminary of Irish priests instituted in 1677 by some refugees.

†Louis XIV. was then seventy-five years old, and had reigned for seventy.

‡When Louis XIV. was in his sixteenth year, some courtiers discussed in his presence the absolute power of the Sultans, who dispose as they like of the goods and the lives of their subjects. "That is something like being a king," said the young monarch. Marshal d'Estrées, alarmed at the tendency revealed in that remark, rejoined, "But, sire, several of these emperors have been strangled even in my time."

§Barbezieux, son of Louvois, Louis's youngest minister, held office at twenty-three, not eighteen; and he was dead in 1713.

‖Madame de Maintenon ¶The Jansenists.

trophies and victories, but he has as great a dread of seeing a good general at the head of his own troops, as at the head of an army of his enemies. It has never I believe happened to any one but himself, to be burdened with more wealth than even a prince could hope for, and yet at the same time steeped in such poverty as a private person could ill brook.

He delights to reward those who serve him; but he pays as liberally the assiduous indolence of his courtiers, as the labors in the field of his captains; often the man who undresses him, or who hands him his *serviette* at table, is preferred before him who has taken cities and gained battles; he does not believe that the greatnes of a monarch is compatible with restriction in the distribution of favors; and, without examining into the merit of a man, he will heap benefits upon him, believing that his selection makes the recipient worthy; accordingly, he has been known to bestow a small pension upon a man who had run off two leagues from the enemy, and a good government on another who had gone four.

Above all, he is magnificent in his buildings; there are more statues in his palace garden* than there are citizens in a large town. His bodyguard is as strong as that of the prince before whom all the thrones of the earth tremble,† his armies are as numerous, his resources as great, and his finances as inexhaustible.

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of Maharram, 1713.

LETTER XXXVIII

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

IT IS an all-important question among men, whether it is better to deprive women of their liberty, or to leave them free. It seems to me that much is to be said on both sides. When Europeans declare that it is most ungenerous to keep those whom we love in misery, we

*At Versailles. † The Shah of Persia.

Asiatics reply that men lower themselves by renouncing the dominion which nature has given them over women. If we are told how troublesome it must be to have a crowd of women shut up together, our reply is, that ten women who obey are less bother than one who does not. If we object, in our turn, that Europeans cannot be happy with women who are unfaithful to them; they answer that the fidelity we boast of does not prevent that disgust, which always follows a surfeit of desire; that our women belong to us too absolutely; that possession obtained so easily leaves no scope for hope or fear; that a little coquetry, like salt, stimulates the appetite, and prevents corruption. Perhaps even a wiser man than I would find this question difficult to decide; for, if the Asiatics do well in seeking due means to quiet their uneasiness, the Europeans do equally well in not being uneasy.

After all, say they, though we should be unfortunate as husbands, we can always find compensation as lovers. A man could have just reason to complain of the infidelity of his wife only if there were no more than three people in the world; odd may be made even, as long as a fourth can be found.

Another much-discussed question is, whether women are intended by nature to be subject to men. "No," said a very gallant philosopher to me the other day; "nature never dictated such a law. The dominion which we exercise over them is tyrannical; they yield themselves to men only because they are more tender-hearted, and consequently, more human and more rational. These advantages, which, had we been reasonable, would, without doubt, have given them the superiority, have been the cause of their subordination, because we are irrational.

"Now, if it is true that it is a tyrannical power which we have over women, it is none the less true that they exercise over us a natural dominion — that of beauty, which nothing can resist. Our power does not extend to all countries, but that of beauty is universal. Why, then, should we have any privilege? Is it because we are stronger than they? But that would be the height of injustice. We use every possible means to discourage them.

Our powers would be found equal if we were educated alike. Try women in those gifts which education has not weakened, and we will soon see which is the abler sex."

It must be admitted, although shocking to our ideas of propriety, that, among the most polite people, women have always borne sway over their husbands; their authority was established by law among the Egyptians in honor of Isis, and among the Babylonians in honor of Semiramis. It was said of the Romans that they, who ruled all the world, were ruled by their wives. I say nothing of the Sauromates,* who were held in a state of slavery by their women; they were too barbarous to be cited as an example.

You see, my dear Ibben, that I have fallen in with the fashion of this country, where they are fond of defending extraordinary opinions, and of reducing everything to a paradox. The prophet has decided this question, and has settled the rights of both sexes. "Women," he says, "ought to honor their husbands; and husbands, their wives: but men are a degree higher in the scale of creation than women."

PARIS, the 26th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1713.

LETTER XXXIX

HAGI† IBBI TO THE JEW BEN JOSHUA, MOHAMMEDAN PROSELYTE, AT SMYRNA

IT SEEMS to me, Ben Joshua, that prodigies always accompany the birth of extraordinary men, as if nature suffered a convulsion, and the celestial power could not bring forth without travail.

There is no birth so marvelous as that of Mohammed. God, who, by the decrees of His providence, had determined

* Herodotus, iv. 110–47.

† A Hagi is a man who has made the pilgrimage to Mecca.—(M.)

from the beginning to send to men that great prophet for the overthrow of Satan, created a light two thousand years before Adam, which, passing from elect to elect through the ancestors of Mohammed, reached him at last, as an authentic sign of his descent from the patriarchs.

It was because of this very prophet that God willed that no child should be conceived, that women should cease to be unclean, and that men should be circumcised.

He came into the world circumcised already, and joy shone upon his face from his birth. The earth shook three times, as if she herself had brought forth; all the idols fell forward, and the thrones of kings were overturned. Lucifer was cast into the depths of the sea, and it was only after forty days' immersion that he swam up from the abyss, and took refuge on Mount Cabes, whence, with a terrible voice, he cried to the angels.

That night, God placed a barrier between the man and the woman, which neither of them could pass. The art of the magicians and of the necromancers cease to avail. A voice from heaven was heard crying, "I have sent into the world my faithful friend."

According to the testimony of Isben Aben, all the birds, the clouds, the winds, and the hosts of angels, met together to bring up this child, and disputed who should have the preference. The birds said in their warblings that it was proper for them to have his upbringing, because they could so easily gather a variety of fruits from many places. The winds murmured and said, "To us rather he should be committed, because we can bear him from all quarters the sweetest odors." "No, no," cried the clouds; "no; it is we who should have charge of him, because we can refresh him at any moment with our showers." From on high the angels indignantly exclaimed, "What will there be left for us to do?" But a voice from heaven silenced their disputes and said, "He will not be withdrawn from mortal hands, because blessed shall be the breasts that suckle him, the hands that touch him, the house wherein he lives, and the bed on which he lies."

After so many striking testimonies, my dear Joshua, only a heart of iron could refuse to believe his holy law. What

more could heaven itself have done to authorize his divine mission, unless it had overturned nature, and destroyed the very men whose salvation it desired.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XL

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

WHEN a great man dies, people assemble in a mosque to hear his funeral oration pronounced — a discourse in his praise from which it would be very difficult to gather a true estimate of the deceased.

I would abolish all funeral pomp. Men should be bewailed at their birth and not at their death. What good purpose do these ceremonies serve, with all the doleful shows that are paraded before a dying man in his last moments: the very tears of his family and the grief of his friends exaggerate for him the loss he is about to sustain.

We are so blind that we know neither when to mourn, nor when to rejoice; our mirth and our sadness are nearly always false.

When I see the Great Mogul foolishly place himself once a year in a balance to be weighed like an ox; when I see his people applaud the increase in weight of their prince, that is to say, the decrease in his capacity to govern them, my heart, Ibben, bleeds for the extravagance of humanity.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLI

THE CHIEF BLACK EUNUCH TO USBEK

ISHMAEL, one of your black eunuchs, O magnificent master, has just died; and I tried to avoid any delay in filling up his place. As eunuchs are very scarce at present, I thought of making use of a black slave whom you have in the country; but I have not yet suc-

ceeded in persuading him to undergo the sacrifice necessary for his consecration to that office. Knowing that this change would in the end work for his advantage, I wished the other day to employ toward him a little violence; and, in company with the superintendent of your gardens, I commanded that, in spite of himself, he should be put into a fit state to render you those services which most appeal to your heart, and to live with me in those sacred quarters, which, at present, he durst not even look at; but he fell a roaring, as if we wanted to flay him, and made such a to-do that he escaped from our hands, and so avoided the fatal knife. I have only now learned that he intends to write you begging for mercy, and that he will urge in his defense that this design has been conceived by me, only in satisfaction of a relentless desire to be avenged for some cutting sarcasms which he says he vented against me. However, I swear to you by the hundred thousand prophets, that in this matter I have acted entirely for the benefit of your service, the only thing which is dear to me, beyond which I have not a single thought. I prostrate myself at your feet.

THE SERAGLIO AT FATME, the 7th of the moon of Maharram, 1713.

LETTER XLII

PHARAN TO USBEK, HIS SOVEREIGN LORD

IF YOU were here, magnificent lord, I would appear to you clad from head to foot in white paper;* and even that would not be enough to contain a description of all the insults which your first black eunuch, the most malignant of men, has heaped upon me since your departure.

Under pretext of some sarcasms which he pretends I aimed at his unfortunate lot, he makes me the victim of an insatiable vengeance. He has stirred up against me the cruel superintendent of your gardens, who, ever since you

*A «sublime expression» which the reader is NOT spared. (See Introduction.)

left, has laid upon me impossible tasks, in attempting which I have a thousand times taken leave of life, although I never for an instant lost my ardor in your service. Many a time have I said to myself, "I who have the gentlest of masters, am yet the most miserable slave on the face of the earth!"

I confess, most generous lord, that I did not believe myself destined to still greater miseries; but this felonious eunuch had yet to fill up the measure of his wickedness. Some days ago, on his unsupported authority, he destined me to the guardianship of your sacred wives; that is to say, to a punishment which to me would be a thousand times more cruel than death. Those who, at their birth, have had the misfortune to undergo such treatment at the hands of their cruel parents, may perhaps comfort themselves with the thought that they have never known any other condition; but were I to lose my place among men, and be deprived of that which makes me human, I should die of grief, if I survived the barbarous knife.

I kiss your feet, sublime lord, in the deepest humility. Grant that I may feel the effects of your revered virtue. Let it not be said that, at your command, there is upon the earth one more unhappy being.

THE GARDENS OF FATME, the 7th of the moon of Maharram, 1713.

LETTER XLIII

USBEK TO PHARAN, AT THE GARDENS OF FATME

REJOICE in your heart, and acknowledge these sacred characters. Let the chief eunuch and the superintendent of my gardens kiss this letter. I prohibit them from attempting anything against you: tell them to purchase the eunuch they require. Do your duty, as if you had me always before you; for know, that as my bounty is great, so, if you abuse it, will the measure of your punishment be.

PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLIV

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

THERE are in France three privileged classes: the church, the sword, and the gown. Each has such a sovereign contempt for the other two, that sometimes a man who deserves to be looked down upon because he is a fool, is despised only because he is a lawyer.

All classes, including the meanest workmen, contend for the excellence of the craft they have chosen; each man exalts himself at the expense of some other of a different profession, according to the idea which he has formed of the superiority of his own.

They all resemble, more or less, a certain woman of the province of Erivan, who, having received some favor from one of our monarchs, wished a thousand times, in the blessings she showered upon him, that Heaven would make him governor of Erivan.

I have read in a history, how some men belonging to the crew of a French vessel which had anchored off the coast of Guinea, went ashore in order to buy some sheep. They were led before the king, who was administering justice to his subjects under a tree. He sat upon his throne, that is to say, upon a block of wood, as proudly as if it had been the seat of the Great Mogul. His guard consisted of three or four men armed with pointed staves; an umbrella served as canopy to protect him from the heat of the sun; for ornaments, he and his consort wore nothing but their own black skins and some rings. This prince, whose vanity was greater even than his poverty, asked the strangers if they talked much of him in France. He imagined that his fame must have gone forth to the ends of the earth; and, unlike that conqueror of whom it is said that he had silenced all the earth, he for his part believed that he kept the whole world chattering.

When the Khan of Tartary has eaten, a herald announces that all the princes of the earth may now go to dinner if

they wish; that barbarian, whose food is milk, who has no house, and who lives only by brigandage, looks upon all the kings of the world as his slaves, and insults them regularly twice a day.

PARIS, the 28th of the moon of
Rhegeb, 1713.

LETTER XLV

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

YESTERDAY morning, as I lay in bed, I heard a violent knocking at my door, which was suddenly opened, or driven in, by a man with whom I have some slight acquaintance, and who appeared to me to be quite beside himself.*

His dress was, to say the least, very homely; his wig, all askew, had not even been combed; he had not had time to mend his black waistcoat; and he had, for that day, omitted the wise precautions with which he was in the habit of concealing the dilapidation of his attire.

"Rise," he said; "I shall want you all day. I have a thousand purchases to make, and it will be a great convenience to me to have you with me. First of all, we have to go to the Rue Saint Honoré to see a notary, who is commissioned to sell an estate worth five hundred thousand livres. On my way here, I stopped a moment in the Faubourg Saint Germain, where I hired a house at two thousand crowns; I hope to sign the contract today."

As soon as, or rather before, I was dressed, my gentleman hurried me downstairs. "Let us start," said he, "by buying and setting up a coach." As a matter of fact, we bought, not only a coach, but — and that in less than an hour — a hundred thousand francs' worth of goods: all

* In this letter Montesquieu was probably thinking of a physician named Boudin, who imagined that he had rediscovered the secrets of the alchemists. Saint-Simon has an admirable description of this man.

this was done with promptitude, because my gentleman haggled about nothing, kept no account, and paid no money. I reflected upon it all; and, when I examined this man, I found in him such an extraordinary mixture of indications of both wealth and poverty, that I knew not what to think. But at last I broke silence, and taking him aside, I said, "Sir, who is to pay for all this?" "Myself," said he. "Come to my room, and I will show you immense treasures, and riches envied by the greatest kings —but not by you, because you will always share with me." I followed him. We climbed up to his fifth story, and by means of a ladder hoisted ourselves to a sixth, which was a closet open to all the winds, and contained nothing but two or three dozen earthenware basins filled with different liquors. "I rose very early," he said, "and, as I have done every morning for the last twenty-five years, I paid a visit to my work. I saw that the great day had come, the day which would make me the richest man in the whole world. Do you see this ruddy liquor? It possesses at present all the qualities required by philosophers for the transmutation of metals. I have collected those grains which you see, and which are, as their color shows, pure gold, although they are a little deficient in weight. This secret, which Nicholas Flamel discovered, but which Raymond Lully * and a million others have sought in vain, has been revealed at last to me; and to-day I find myself a happy adept. May God grant that with the treasures which He has committed to me I may do nothing but for His glory!"

Transported with anger, I left the room, and descended, or rather threw myself down the stairs, and left this man of boundless wealth in his garret. Farewell, my dear Usbek, I will visit you to-morrow, and, if you wish, we can return to Paris together.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Rhegeb, 1713.

* Nicholas Flamel, a citizen of Paris (1330–1418), was regarded as an alchemist by those who envied his great fortune. Raymond Lully, a Spanish savant (1235–1315), was considered, rightly or wrongly, one of the most famous alchemists.

LETTER XLVI

Usbek to Rhedi, at Venice

I MEET here certain people who are never done discussing religion, but who seem at the same time to contend as to who shall observe it least.

These disputants are, however, no better Christians, nor even better citizens, than others; and that it is that moves me: for the principal part of any religion consists in obedience to the laws, in loving mankind, and in revering one's parents.

Indeed, ought it not to be the chief aim of a religious man to please the Deity who has founded the religion which he professes? But the surest way to please God is, without doubt, to obey the laws of society, and do our duty toward men. For, whatever religion we may profess, as soon as we grant its existence, it becomes at once necessary to assume that God loves men, since He establishes a religion for their happiness: then, since He loves men, we are certain of pleasing Him in loving them too—in other words, in fulfilling all the duties of charity and humanity, and in breaking none of the laws under which men live.

We are much more certain of pleasing God in this way, than in the observance of this or that ceremony; for ceremonies have no goodness in themselves; they are only relatively good, and on the supposition that God has commanded them. But this is a subject which might be discussed endlessly; and one could easily deceive oneself regarding it, because it is necessary to choose the rites of one religion from among those of two thousand.

A man prayed to God daily in the following terms: "Lord, I do not understand any of those discussions that are carried on without end regarding Thee: I would serve Thee according to Thy will; but each man whom I consult would have me serve Thee according to his. When I desire to pray, I know not in which language to address

Thee. Nor do I know what posture to adopt: one bids me pray standing; another, sitting; and another requires me to kneel. That is not all: there are some who insist that I ought to wash every morning in cold water; others maintain that Thou regardest me with horror if I do not remove a certain small portion of my flesh. I happened the other day to eat of a rabbit in a caravansary: three men who were present made me tremble: all three maintained that I had grievously offended Thee; one* because that animal was unclean; another,† because it had been strangled; and the third,‡ because it was not a fish. A Brahman who was passing by, and whom I asked to be our judge, said to me, 'They are all wrong, for it appears that you did not kill the animal yourself.' 'I did, though,' said I. 'Ah, then, you have committed an abominable act, which God will never pardon,' said he to me, in a severe tone. 'How do you know that the soul of your father had not passed into that beast?' All these things, O Lord, trouble me beyond expression. I cannot move my head but I am threatened with Thy wrath. Nevertheless I would please Thee, and devote to that end the life which Thou hast given me. I may be deceiving myself; but I think that the best means to accomplish this aim is to live as a good citizen in the society where Thou hast placed me, and as a good father in the family which Thou has given me."

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of
Chahban, 1713.

LETTER XLVII

ZACHI TO USBEK, AT PARIS

I HAVE great news for you. Zephis and I are reconciled, and the seraglio, which had taken sides in our quarrel, is reunited. I need nothing now in this abode of peace but you. Come, my dear Usbek, come to me, and let love be triumphant.

*A Jew.—(M.) †A Turk.—(M.) ‡An Armenian.—(M.)

I made a great feast in honor of Zephis, to which your mother, your wives, and your principal concubines were invited; your aunts and some of your female cousins also came; they arrived on horseback, covered by the dark cloud of their veils and garments.

Next day we set out for the country, where we hope to have greater liberty. We mounted our camels, four in each palanquin. As the party had been improvised, we had not time to send round the *courouc*,* but the chief eunuch, always attentive, took another precaution: to the cloth which hid us from sight, he attached a curtain so thick, that we could positively see nobody.

When we reached that river which we have to cross, each of us went, in the usual way, into a box which was transported in the ferry boat; for we were told that there were a great many people on the river. One inquisitive person who approached too near the place where we were shut up, received a mortal blow, which cut him off forever from the light of day; another, who was found bathing naked on the bank, met the same fate: those two wretches were sacrificed by your faithful eunuchs to your honor and to ours.

But listen to the rest of our adventures. When we had reached the middle of the river, so violent a wind arose, and such a dense cloud covered the sky, that our sailors began to lose hope. Terrified at the danger, we nearly all swooned away. I remember that I heard the voices of our eunuchs in dispute. Some of them said that, to save us from danger, we must be set at liberty; but their chief insisted, unfalteringly, that he would sooner die than permit his master to be so dishonored, and that he would plunge a dagger into the breast of any one who should dare to make such proposals. One of my slaves, quite beside herself and all undressed, came running to my assistance; but a black eunuch seized her brutally, and thrust her back whence she had come. Then I swooned away, and returned to myself only after the danger was past.

How distressing journeys are for us poor women! Men are exposed only to those dangers which threaten their

* *Courouc* (back! back!) is the cry of the eunuchs who accompany the women's litters.

lives; but we are in constant terror of losing either life or virtue. Farewell, my dear Usbek, whom I shall always adore.

THE SERAGLIO AT FATME, the 2d of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER XLVIII

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

THOSE who take pleasure in their own instruction are never idle. Although I am not employed on any business of importance, I am yet constantly occupied. I spend my time observing, and at night I write down what I have noticed, what I have seen, what I have heard, during the day. I am interested in everything, astonished at everything: I am like a child, whose organs, still oversensitive, are vividly impressed by the merest trifles.*

You would scarcely believe it, but we have been well received in all circles, and among all classes. This is largely owing to the quick wit and natural gayety of Rica, which lead him to seek out everybody, and make him equally sought after. Our foreign aspect offends nobody; indeed, we are delighted at the surprise which people show on finding us not altogether without manners; for the French imagine that men are not among the products of our country. Nevertheless, I must admit that they are well worth undeceiving.

I spent some days in the country near Paris at the house of a man of some note, who delights in having company with him. He has a very amiable wife, who, along with great modesty, possesses what the secluded life they lead stifles in our Persian women, a charming gayety.

Stranger as I was, I had nothing better to do than to study the crowd of people who came and went without ceasing, affording me a constant change of subject for con-

*Montesquieu describes himself in this passage.

templation. I noticed at once one man, whose simplicity pleased me; I allied myself with him, and he with me, in such a manner that we were always together.

One day, as we were talking quietly in a large company, leaving the general conversation to the others, I said, "You will perhaps find in me more inquisitiveness than good manners; but I beg you to let me ask some questions, for I am wearied to death doing nothing, and of living with people with whom I have nothing in common. My thoughts have been busy these two days; there is not one among these men who has not put me to the torture two hundred times; in a thousand years I would never understand them; they are more invisible to me than the wives of our great king." "You have only to ask," replied he, "and I will tell you all you desire — the more willingly because I think you a discreet man, who will not abuse my confidence."

"Who is that man," said I, "who has told us so much about the banquets at which he has entertained the great, who is so familiar with your dukes, and who talks so often to your ministers, who, they tell me, are so difficult of access? He ought surely to be a man of quality; but his aspect is so mean that he is hardly an honor to the aristocracy; and, besides, I find him deficient in education. I am a stranger; but it seems to me that there is, generally speaking, a certain tone of good breeding common to all nations, and I do not find it in him. Can it be that your upper classes are not so well trained as those of other nations?" "That man," answered he, laughing, "is a farmer-general; he is as much above others in wealth, as he is inferior to us all by birth. He might have the best people in Paris at his table, if he could make up his mind never to eat in his own house. He is very impertinent, as you see; but he excels in his cook, and is not ungrateful, for you heard how he praised him to-day."

"And that big man dressed in black," said I, "whom that lady has placed next her? How comes he to wear a dress so solemn, with so jaunty an air, and such a florid complexion? He smiles benignly when he is addressed; his attire is more modest, but not less carefully adjusted than that of your women." "That," answered he, "is a

preacher, and, which is worse, a confessor. Such as he is, he knows more of their own affairs than the husbands; he is acquainted with the women's weak side, and they also know his." "Ha!" cried I, "he talks forever of something he calls Grace?" "No, not always," was the reply; "in the ear of a pretty woman he speaks more willingly of the Fall: in public, he is a son of thunder; in private, as gentle as a lamb." "It seems to me," said I, "that he receives much attention, and is held in great respect." "In great respect! Why! he is a necessity; he is the sweetener of solitude; then there are little lessons, officious cares, set visits; he cures a headache better than any man in the world; he is incomparable."

"But, if I may trouble you again, tell me who that ill-dressed person is opposite us? He makes occasional grimaces, and does not speak like the others; and without wit enough to talk, he talks that he may have wit." "That," answered he, "is a poet, the most grotesque of human kind. These sort of people declare that they are born what they are; and, I may add, what they will be all their lives, namely, almost always, the most ridiculous of men; and so nobody spares them; contempt is cast upon them from every quarter. Hunger has driven that one into this house. He is well received by its master and mistress, as their good nature and courtesy are always the same to everybody. He wrote their epithalamium when they were married, and it is the best thing he has done, for the marriage has been as fortunate as he prophesied it would be.

"You will not believe, perhaps," added he, "prepossessed as you are in favor of the East, that there are among us happy marriages, and wives whose virtue is a sufficient guard. This couple, here, enjoy untroubled peace; everybody loves and esteems them; only one thing is amiss: in their good nature they receive all kinds of people, which makes the company at their house sometimes not altogether unexceptionable. I, of course, have nothing to say against it; we must live with people as we find them; those who are said to be well bred are often only those who are exquisite in their vices; and perhaps it is with them as with poisons, the more subtle, the more dangerous."

"And that old man," I whispered, "who looks so morose? I took him at first for a foreigner; because, in addition to being dressed differently from the rest, he condemns everything that is done in France, and disapproves of your government." "He is an old soldier," said he, "who makes himself memorable to all his hearers by the tedious story of his exploits. He cannot endure the thought that France has gained any battles without him, nor hear a siege bragged of at which he did not mount the breach. He believes himself so essential to our history that he imagines it came to an end when he retired; some wounds he has received mean, simply, the dissolution of the monarchy; and, unlike the philosophers who maintain that enjoyment is only in the present, and that the past is as if it had not been, he, on the contrary, delights in nothing but the past, and exists only in his old campaigns; he breathes the air of the age that has gone by, just as heroes ought to live in that which is to come." "But why," I asked, "has he quitted the service?" "He has not quitted it, but it has quitted him. He has been employed in a small post, where he will retail his adventures for the rest of his days; but he will never get any further; the path of honor is closed to him." "And why?" asked I. "It is a maxim in France," replied he, "never to advance officers whose patience has been worn out as subalterns; we look upon them as men whose minds have been narrowed by detail; and who, through a constant application to small things, are become incapable of great ones. We believe that a man who, at thirty, has not the qualities of a general, will never have them; that he, whose glance cannot take in at once a tract of several leagues as if from every point of view, who is not possessed of that presence of mind which in victory leaves no advantage unimproved, and in defeat employs every resource, will never acquire such capacity. Therefore we employ in brilliant services those great, those sublime men, on whom Heaven has bestowed not only the courage, but the genius of the hero; and in inferior services those whose talents are inferior. Of this number are such as have grown old in obscure warfare; they can succeed only at what they have been doing all their lives; and it would

be ill-advised to start them on fresh employment when age has weakened their powers."

A moment after, curiosity again seized me, and I said, "I promise not to ask another question if you will only answer this one. Who is that tall young man who wears his own hair, and has more impertinence that wit? How comes it that he speaks louder than the others, and is so charmed with himself for being in the world?" "That is a great lady-killer," he replied. With these words some people entered, others left, and all rose. Some one came to speak to my acquaintance, and I remained in my ignorance. But shortly after, I know not by what chance, the young man in question found himself beside me, and began to talk. "It is fine weather," he said. "Will you take a turn with me in the garden?" I replied as civilly as I could, and we went out together. "I have come to the country," said he, "to please the mistress of the house, with whom I am not on the worst of terms. There is a certain woman in the world who will be rather out of humor; but what can one do? I visit the finest women in Paris; but I do not confine my attentions to one; they have plenty to do to look after me, for, between you and me, I am a sad dog." "In that case, sir," said I, "you doubtless have some office or employment which prevents you from waiting on them more assiduously?" "No, sir; I have no other business than to provoke husbands, and drive fathers to despair; I delight in alarming a woman who thinks me hers, and in bringing her within an ace of losing me. A set of us young fellows divide up Paris among us in this pursuit, and keep it wondering at everything we do." "From what I understand," said I, "you make more stir than the most valorous warrior, and are more regarded than a grave magistrate. If you were in Persia, you would not enjoy all these advantages; you would be held fitter to guard our women than to please them." The blood mounted to my face; and I believe, had I gone on speaking, I could not have refrained from affronting him.

What say you to a country where such people are tolerated, and where a man who follows such a profession is

allowed to live? Where faithlessness, treachery, rape, deceit, and injustice lead to distinction? Where a man is esteemed because he has bereaved a father of his daughter, a husband of his wife, and distresses the happiest and purest homes? Happy the children of Hali who protect their families from outrage and seduction! Heaven's light is not purer than the fire that burns in the hearts of our wives; our daughters think only with dread of the day when they will be deprived of that purity, in virtue of which they rank with the angels and the spiritual powers. My beloved land, on which the morning sun looks first, thou art unsoiled by those horrible crimes which compel that star to hide his beams as he approaches the dark West!

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER XLIX

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

AS I WAS in my room the other day, there came to me a dervish amazingly dressed. His beard descended to his rope girdle; his feet were naked; his gown gray, coarse and peaked in places. The whole appeared to me so odd that my first idea was to send for a painter to make a sketch of it.

First of all he paid me a prolonged compliment, in which he informed me that he was a man of merit, and a Capuchin to boot. "They tell me, sir," continued he, "that you return soon to the court of Persia, where you hold high rank. I have come to ask your protection, and to beg you to obtain for us from the king a small establishment in the neighborhood of Casbin for two or three friars." "Father," said I, "do you then wish to go to Persia?" "Me, sir," cried he; "I shall take better care of myself. I am Provincial here, and I would not exchange my place for that of all the Capuchins in the world."

"Then why the devil do you make this request?" "Because," said he, "if we had this monastery, our Italian fathers would send out two or three friars." "You know those friars, of course," said I. "No, sir, I do not." "'Sdeath!" cried I, "of what consequence is it to you that they should go to Persia then? A charming project, indeed, to send two Capuchins to take the air in Casbin! How useful that will be to Europe and to Asia! and how important it is to interest monarchs in it! So, this is what is meant by your admirable colonies! Begone; you and your fellows were not made to be transplanted; and you had best continue to crawl about the places in which you were engendered."

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER L

RICA TO * * *

I HAVE met some people to whom virtue was so natural that they were not even conscious of it; they applied themselves to their duty without any compulsion, and were led to it instinctively; far from making their own admirable qualities a subject of conversation, it seemed as if they were quite ignorant of their existence. Such people I love; not those men who seem to be astonished at their own virtue, and who look upon a good deed as a marvel the relation of which should excite wonder.

If modesty is a necessary virtue in those to whom Heaven has given great talents, what is to be said of those insects who dare to exhibit a pride which would dishonor the greatest men?

On every hand I meet people who talk constantly about themselves; their conversation is a mirror which reflects only their impertinent faces; they will tell you of the merest trifles that happen to them, and expect the interest they take in them to magnify their importance in your eyes; they have done everything, seen everything, said

everything, thought everything; they are a pattern to all mankind, a subject of inexhaustible comparisons, a source of precedents which never dries up. Oh! how insipid is self-praise!

Some days ago a man of this type worried us for two hours, about himself, his worth, his talents; but, since there is no such thing as perpetual motion, he had to cease. It was then our turn to talk, and we took it.

A man, who seemed sufficiently splenetic, commenced to grumble at the tediousness of conversation. "What! are there none but fools, who describe their own character, and bring everything home to themselves?" "You are right," replied our tattling friend, abruptly. "Nobody does as I do; I never praise myself; I have means, am well-born, spend freely, and my friends say that I have some wit; but I never talk of all that; if I have any good qualities, that which I set most store by, is my modesty."

I wondered at this malapert; and while he was talking very loud, I whispered, "Happy is he who has enough of vanity never to boast of his own qualities, who dreads the ridicule of his audience, and never hurts the pride of others by exalting himself!"

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1713.

LETTER LI

NARGUM, PERSIAN ENVOY IN MUSCOVY, TO USBEK, at PARIS

THE news has come from Ispahan, that you have left Persia, and are actually in Paris. Why was I left to learn these tidings from another than yourself?

By order of the king of kings I have now been five years in this country, where I have concluded several important transactions.

You know that the Czar is the only Christian prince whose interests are allied to those of Persia, because, like us, he is the enemy of the Turks.

His empire is larger than ours, for the distance between Moscow and the extremities of his dominions on the Chinese frontier measures a thousand leagues.

He is absolute master of the lives and goods of his subjects, who are all slaves, with the exception of four families. The vicar of the prophets, the king of kings, whose footstool is the sky, does not wield a scepter more puissant.

In view of the frightful climate of this country, one would never think that exile could be a punishment for a Muscovite: nevertheless, when a man of consequence is disgraced, he is banished to Siberia.

It is the law of our prophet which forbids us to drink wine, it is that of their prince which forbids the Muscovites.

They receive their guests in a style very unlike the Persians. When a stranger enters a house, the husband presents his wife to him, and he kisses her: this is counted an act of courtesy to the husband.

Although fathers, in arranging their daughters' marriages, usually stipulate that the husband shall not whip them, yet you would hardly believe how dearly the Muscovite women like to be beaten;* they are unable to understand how they can possess their husband's love, if he does not thrash them in proper style. If he is slack in this matter, it is an unpardonable indication of coldness. Here is a letter which a Muscovite wife recently wrote to her mother:—

"My Dear Mother,—I am the most wretched woman in the world. I have left nothing undone to make my husband love me, and I have never been able to succeed. Yesterday, having a thousand things to attend to in the house, I went out and stayed away all day. I expected on my return that he would beat me severely, but he did not say a single word. My sister fares much better; her husband beats her every day; he knocks her down at once if she only looks at a man: they are very affectionate, and there is between them the best understanding in the world.

* These manners have changed.—(M.)

"It is that which makes her so proud, but I will not allow her to triumph over me any longer. I am resolved to make my husband love me, whatever it may cost: I will so anger him that he will be forced to give me marks of his affection. No one shall say that I am not beaten, and that I am of no consequence in my own house. I will cry out with all my might at the least touch, so that people may think that all goes well; and if any of my neighbors should come to my aid, I feel as if I would strangle them. I wish, my dear mother, you would point out to my husband how unworthily he treats me. My father is a gentleman, and behaved differently; indeed, if I remember rightly, when I was a little girl he used to love you too much. I embrace you, my dear mother."

The Muscovites may not leave their country, even in order to travel; and so, separated from other nations by the law of the land, they have become attached to their ancient customs, all the more warmly, that they do not think it possible to have others.

But the reigning prince* wishes to change everything; he had a great quarrel with his subjects about their beards; the clergy and the monks defended their ignorance with equal obstinacy.

He is bent on the improvement of the arts, and leaves nothing undone to spread throughout Europe and Asia the fame of his nation, till now forgotten, and hardly even known to itself.

Restless, and always occupied, he wanders about his vast dominions, leaving everywhere tokens of his savage nature.

Then he quits them, as if they were too small to contain him, and goes to Europe exploring other provinces and new kingdoms.

I embrace you, my dear Usbek, and beg you to send me your news.

Moscow, the 2d of the moon of
Chalval, 1713.

* Peter the Great.

LETTER LII

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

I WAS much amused in a certain house the other day. There were present women of all ages; one of eighty years, one of sixty, and one of forty; the last had with her a niece of from twenty to twenty-two. Instinct led me to choose the company of the youngest. She whispered to me, "What do you think of my aunt? Old as she is, she still tries to pass for a beauty, and wishes to have lovers." "She is wrong," said I; "such an intention is becoming only in you." A moment after, I found myself beside her aunt, who said to me, "What do think of that woman? Although she is at least sixty years old she has spent hours to-day over her toilet." "It was a waste of time," said I, "which only such charms as yours could have excused." I crossed over to the unfortunate dame of threescore, and was pitying her in my heart, when she whispered to me, "Did you ever see anything so ridiculous? Fancy a woman of eighty wearing flame-colored ribbons! She would like to be young, and she succeeds, for that is childish."

"Good Heavens!" I exclaimed to myself; "must we be forever blind to our own folly? Perhaps, after all," I argued, "it is a blessing that we should find consolation in the absurdities of others." However, I was bent on being amused, and I said, still to myself, "This is surely high enough; let us descend, beginning at the summit." So I addressed the lady of fourscore. "Madam," I said, "you are so wonderfully like that lady, whom I have just left to speak to you, that I am certain you must be sisters — I should say about the same age." "Indeed sir," she rejoined, "when one of us dies, the other will not have long to live; I do not believe there is two days' difference between us." Having left my decrepit dame, I went again to her of sixty. "Madam, you must decide a bet I have made. I have wagered that you and that lady," indicating her of forty, "are of the same age." "Well," said she, "I believe there

is not six months' difference." Good, so far; let us get on. Still descending, I returned to the lady of forty. "Madam, have the goodness to tell me if you were jesting when you called that young lady at the other table, your niece. You are as young as she; there is even a touch of age in her face, which you certainly have not; and the brilliancy of your complexion . . ." "Listen," she said; "I am her aunt; but her mother was at least twenty-five years older than me. We are not even children of the same marriage; I have heard my departed sister say that her daughter and I were born in the same year." "I was right, then, madam, and you cannot blame me for being astonished."

My dear Usbek, women who feel that the loss of their charms is aging them before their time, long ardently to be young again; and why should we blame them for deceiving others, since they take such trouble to deceive themselves, and to dispossess their minds of the most painful of all thoughts?

PARIS, the 3d of the moon of Chalval, 1713.

LETTER LIII

ZELIS TO USBEK, AT PARIS

NO PASSION was ever stronger or more vehement than that of Cosrou, the white eunuch, for my slave Zelida; he has asked her in marriage with such persistence, that I can no longer refuse him. And why should I object, when her mother does not, and since Zelida herself seems satisfied with the idea of this mock union, and the empty shadow which it offers her?

What does she want with this wretched creature? She is marrying jealousy personified, a husband who is no husband; who will only exchange his coldness for an impotent despair; who, by perpetually recalling the memory of what he was, will but remind her of what he no longer is; who, always ready to possess, but never possessing, will forever

deceive himself and her, keeping her constantly alive to the wretchedness of her condition.

And then! to be always in dreams and fancies; to live only in imagination; to be always on the threshold, and never in the abode, of pleasure; languishing in the arms of impotence, responding, not to happy sighs, but to vain regrets!

How one ought to despise a man of that kind, made only to guard and not to own! I seek love, and cannot find it!

I speak to you freely, because you love my artlessness, and prefer my frankness and amorous disposition to the affected modesty of my companions.

I have heard you say a thousand times that eunuchs do enjoy a certain pleasure with women, which we know nothing of; that nature compensates them for their loss, having means with which to amend their unfortunate condition; that one may cease to be a man, but not to feel desire; and that in that state one acquires a third sense, and exchanges, as it were, one pleasure for another.

If that be so, Zelida will have less to complain of. It is something to live with people who are not, after all, so miserable. Send me your instructions in the matter, and let me know if you wish the marriage to take place in the seraglio. Farewell.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 5th of the moon of Chalval, 1713.

LETTER LIV

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

MY ROOM is, as you know, separated from the others only by a slim partition, which is broken here and there, so that one can hear what is said next door. This morning I overheard a man, pacing rapidly up and down, and saying to another, "I don't know how it is, but everything seems to go against me. For more than three days I have said nothing which can do me honor; and I find myself entirely lost among the crowd of talkers; no one

pays the least attention to me, no one speaks to me twice. I had prepared some brilliant passages to lighten my conversation; not once was I allowed to get them off. I had a charming story to tell; but always when I found an opportunity for it, people evaded it, as if on purpose. I have nursed some witticisms in my head for four days without being able to make the least use of them. If this continues, it will end in my becoming a fool; I cannot avoid it; it seems to be my fate. Yesterday I had hoped to shine in the company of four old ladies, who certainly had no idea of imposing on me. I had some of the most charming things to say imaginable; but it took me more than a quarter of an hour to bring the conversation round, and even then they failed to follow me; like the fatal sisters, they cut the thread of my discourse. Shall I tell you? It is most difficult to support the character of a man of wit. I fail to comprehend how you obtained it."

"I have an idea," replied the other. "Let us help each other to gain this reputation: suppose we form a partnership for the purpose. Every day we shall tell each other what we intend to say; and we shall help each other so well, that if any one attempts to interrupt the flow of our ideas, we shall inspire him with admiration; and if he refuses to be fascinated, then he will be coerced. We shall have the points fixed at which to approve; and where to smile, and where to burst out into a roar of laughter, will all be arranged beforehand. You will see that we shall give the tone to conversation, and that everybody will admire the nimbleness of our wit, and the felicity of our repartees; and we shall have a code of head shakes for our mutual protection. To-day you will shine, to-morrow you will be my foil. We shall go together to a house, and I shall exclaim, indicating you, 'I must tell you the delightful reply my friend made just now to a man we met in the street.' I shall then turn toward you and say, 'He did not expect this. You see how astonished he is.' I shall repeat some of my verses, and you will say, 'I was present when he made them; at a supper, it was; he turned them off in an instant.' Sometimes we shall rally each other, and then people will exclaim, 'Look, how they

attack each other, how they defend themselves; this is no child's play; let us see how he will come out of that. Wonderful, what presence of mind! Why, this is a downright battle!' But no one will dream how we practiced it all beforehand. We shall have to buy certain books, repositories of wit composed for the use of those who, having none, would fain appear as if they had: all depends on the pattern. I should say, that before six months are out we should be able to keep up a conversation of an hour's length, entirely consisting of *bons-mots*. But we shall have to be very careful of one thing, and that is, the fate of our witticisms: it is not enough to make a brilliant remark, it must be sown broadcast; without that, it is as good as lost; and I confess there is nothing so heartrending as to see a smart thing that one has said die in the ear of the fool who hears it. For misfortunes of that kind we have often, it is true, a sort of compensation in the speedy oblivion which overtakes the foolish things we say. Here, my dear sir, is the part we must play. Do as I have suggested, and I promise you, before six months, a place in the Academy. You see the time of toil will not be long; and then you can abandon your art as soon as you like; but you will always be a man of wit, no matter what you do. They say, that in France, when a man enters any circle of society, he catches at once what is called *l'esprit du corps:* this you will do, and the only thing I dread is, that you will be overwhelmed with applause."

PARIS, the 6th of the moon of Zilcade, 1714.

LETTER LV

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

AMONG the Europeans, the first quarter of an hour of marriage settles all difficulties; the last favors are always contemporary with the marriage blessing. The women here are not like those of Persia, who sometimes dispute the ground for months together. They give them-

selves at once ; and if they lose nothing, it is because they have nothing to lose. One shameful result of this is, that one can always tell the moment of their defeat ; and, without consulting the stars, it is possible to predict to the very hour the birth of their children.

The French seldom speak of their wives :* they are afraid to do so before people who may know them better than themselves.

There are, among the French, a set of most miserable men, whom nobody comforts — jealous husbands, to wit ; there are among them those whom everybody hates — namely, jealous husbands ; there are men whom the whole world despises — once more, jealous husbands.

And so, there is no country where there are so few of them as in France. Their peace of mind is not based upon the confidence which they have in their wives ; but on the bad opinion which they have of them. All the wise precautions of the Asiatics ; the veils which cover them, the prisons in which they are kept, the eunuchs who guard them, seem to the French only so many obstacles better fitted to exercise than to tire the ingenuity of women. Here, husbands accept their lot with a good grace, and the infidelities of their wives seem to them as inevitable as fate. A husband, who would wish to monopolize his wife, would be looked upon as a disturber of the pleasure of the public, as a lunatic who wanted to enjoy the light of the sun to the exclusion of everybody else.

Here, a husband who loves his wife is a man who has not enough merit to engage the affections of some other woman ; who makes a bad use of the power given him by the law to supply those pleasures which he can obtain in no other way ; who claims all his rights to the prejudice of the whole community ; who appropriates to his own use that which he only holds in pawn ; and who tries, as far as he can, to overturn the tacit agreement, in which the happiness of both sexes consists. The fame, so little desired in Asia, of being married to a beautiful woman, is

* It was a rule of good society. « Most men understand that they should say very little about their wives ; but few know that they should talk still less about themselves. »— LA ROCHEFOUCAULD.

here the source of no uneasiness. No one has ever to seek far for entertainment. A prince consoles himself for the loss of one place by taking anothers when Bagdad fell to the Turks, were we not taking from the Mogul the fortress of Candahar?

Generally speaking, a man who winks at his wife's infidelities, does not lose respect; on the contrary, he is praised for his prudence: dishonor only attaches to special cases.

Not that there are no virtuous women; there are, and they may be said to be distinguished too. My conductor always took care to point them out; but they were all so ugly that one would require to be a saint not to hate virtue.

After what I have told you of the morals and manners of this country, you will easily imagine that the French do not altogether plume themselves upon their constancy. They believe that it is as ridiculous to swear eternal love to a woman, as to insist that one will always be in the best of health, or always as happy as the day is long. When they promise a woman to love her all their lives, they suppose that she on her side undertakes to be always lovable; and if she breaks her word, they think that they are no longer bound by theirs.

PARIS, the 7th of the moon of
Zilcade, 1714.

LETTER LVI

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

GAMING is very common in Europe. To be a gamester is to have a position in society, although one is neither well-born, wealthy, nor a man of integrity: it entitles one, without any inquiry, to rank as a gentleman. All know that it is often a most untrustworthy credential, but people have made up their minds to be deceived.

Above all, the women follow it. It is true that the attractions of a dearer passion prevent them from giving it

much attention in their youth; but as they grow old, their love of gaming seems to grow young, and when all others are decayed, that passion fills up the void.

Their desire is to ruin their husbands; and for that purpose they have means suitable to all ages, from the tenderest youth to the most decrepit age; dress and luxury begin the disorder, which gallantry increases, and gaming completes.

I have often seen nine or ten women, or rather, nine or ten centuries, seated round a table; I have watched them hoping, fearing, rejoicing — above all, in their transports of anger: you would have said that they would never grow calm again, and that life would leave them before their despair; you would have been in doubt whether they were paying their creditors or their legatees.

It seems to have been the chief aim of our holy Prophet to restrain us from everything that might disturb the reason: he has prohibited the use of wine, which steals away man's brains; by a special law he has forbidden games of chance; and where the cause of passion could not be removed he has subdued it. Love among us brings with it no trouble, no frenzy: it is a languid passion which leaves our souls serene: plurality of wives saves us from the dominion of women, and tempers the violence of our desires.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Zilhage, 1714.

LETTER LVII

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

AN IMMENSE number of courtesans are maintained by the libertines of Paris, and a great crowd of dervishes by its bigots. These dervishes take three oaths: of obedience, of poverty, and of chastity. They say that the first is the best observed of the three; as to the second, it is not observed at all; you can form your own opinion with regard to the third.

But whatever the wealth of these dervishes may be, they always profess poverty, just as our glorious Sultan would never dream of renouncing his magnificence and sublimity; and they are right, for their reputation as paupers prevents them from being poor.

The physicians and some of these dervishes, called confessors, are always either highly esteemed, or treated with contumely: yet it is said that heirs, on the whole, prefer physicians to confessors.

The other day, I visited a convent of dervishes. One of them, whose white hair made him venerable, received me very courteously. He showed me over the whole house, and then we went into the garden, and had some talk. "Father," said I, "what is your employment in the community?" "Sir," replied he, evidently well pleased with my question, "I am a casuist." "A casuist," exclaimed I. "During my stay in France I have not heard of this profession till now." "What! You do not know what a casuist is? Very well, listen; I will give you an explanation which will leave nothing to be desired. There are two descriptions of sin: that called mortal, which excludes the sinner forever from Paradise; and venial sin, which certainly offends God, but does not excite Him to that pitch of wrath which can be satisfied only by depriving the sinner of felicity. Now, all our art consists in carefully distinguishing these two descriptions of sin; for, with the exception of some libertines, all Christians wish to go to heaven; but there is hardly one among them who would not prefer to get there at as cheap a rate as possible. When they thoroughly understand which sins are mortal, they try not to commit them; and their business is done. There are some who do not aspire to such a high degree of perfection; and, having no ambition, they do not care for the first places: accordingly they would enter Paradise as easily as possible; provided they get there, they are satisfied: that is their aim, neither more nor less. There are people who would take heaven by storm rather than not obtain it, and who would say to God, 'Lord, I have fulfilled the conditions exactly; you cannot refuse to keep your word: as I have done no more than you have

required, I expect no more from you than you have promised.'

"Therefore, sir, we casuists are a necessity. This is not all, however; you shall learn something further. The deed does not constitute the crime, but the knowledge of him who commits it: he who does what is wrong, so long as he can believe that it is not so, has a safe conscience; and, as there are an immense number of ambiguous actions, a casuist can endue them with a degree of goodness which they have not, simply by pronouncing them good; and, provided he can convince people of their harmlessness, such sins lose their deadliness entirely.

"This is the secret of the craft in which I have grown old; I have shown you its nicety: all things, even such as may seem most refractory, are susceptible of the required twist."

"Father," said I, "this is admirable; but how do you reconcile yourself with heaven? If the Sophy had at his court a man who dealt with him as you deal with God, who played fast and loose with his commandments, and taught his subjects when they ought to obey them, and when they might break them, he would have him impaled at once. I salute you, master dervish," and I left him without waiting for his reply.

PARIS, the 23d of the moon of
Maharram, 1714.

LETTER LVIII

RICA TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

MY DEAR Rhedi, there are in Paris a great many trades. Some good-natured creature will offer you for a little money the secret of making gold. Another promises you the love of the spirits of the air, if you will see no women for a small trifle of thirty years.

Then you will meet with wizards so skillful, that they can tell you all your life, with the simple proviso of a quarter of an hour's conversation with your servants.

Adroit women turn virginity into a flower, which withers and blooms again every day, and is gathered for the hundredth time with more anguish than the first.

There are other women as skillful, who, repairing by the force of their art all the ravages of time, know how to restore to a face beauty enough to strike one blind, and even to summon a woman from the very end of life's journey back to its tender youthful opening.

All these people live, or seek a livelihood, in this great city, the mother of invention.

The incomes of the citizens cannot be farmed: they consist only in skill and industry: each has his own, and makes the best of it.

He who would wish to count the dervishes who run after the revenue of some mosque, might as well attempt to number the sands of the sea, or the slaves of our monarch.

An infinite number of professors of languages, of arts, and of sciences, teach what they do not know; and their talent is not by any means despicable; for much less wit is required to exhibit one's knowledge, than to teach what one knows nothing of.

One cannot die here, except suddenly: death is left no other method of exercising his power; because, in every hole and corner, people are ready with infallible cures for every imaginable disease.

All the shops are hung with invisible nets, in which the customers are snared. Sometimes, however, one gets off with a good bargain. A shopgirl will wheedle a man for a stricken hour, and all to make him buy a packet of toothpicks.

Every one who goes from this city, leaves it a warier man than when he entered: by dint of throwing away his means on others, he learns how to keep it to himself — the only benefit a stranger carries away from this sorceress of a city.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Saphar, 1714.

LETTER LIX

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

THE other day I visited a house, where the company was of the most miscellaneous description. I found the conversation monopolized by two old women, who had labored in vain all morning to rejuvenate themselves. "I must say," remarked one of them, "that the men of to-day are very different from those we knew in our youth: they were refined, courteous, obliging; but now, I find their coarseness intolerable." "All is altered," said a man, who appeared to be crippled with gout. "Things are not as they used to be forty years ago. People were healthier; affairs went well; and everybody was cheerful; nobody asked for anything better than to dance and sing. Now, you won't see a single cheerful face." A moment after, the conversation turned to politics. "'Sdeath!" said an old lord; "the state is no longer governed. Where will you find now a minister like M. Colbert? I knew him well, M. Colbert; he was a friend of mine; he always made them pay me my pension before it was due: he was such a capital financier! Everybody was comfortable; but now I am ruined." "Sir," said an ecclesiastic, "you are speaking of the most wonderful period of our invincible monarch's reign: could anything be more magnificent than what he then did to extirpate heresy?"* "And does the abolition of dueling count for nothing?"† asked a self-satisfied man who had not yet spoken. "A most judicious remark," whispered some one in my ear. "That man is delighted with the dueling law; and he observes it so faithfully, that six months ago he took a sound drubbing, rather than violate it."

It seems to me, Usbek, that our opinions are always influenced by a secret application to ourselves. I am not

* The Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685.

† Edicts of 1654 and of 1679.

surprised that negroes paint the devil with a complexion of dazzling whiteness, and their gods as black as coal; that the Venus of certain races has breasts that hang down to her thighs; and finally, that all idolaters have represented their gods in the likeness of men, and have ascribed to them all their own passions. It has been very well said, that if triangles were to make to themselves gods, they would give them three sides.

My dear Usbek, when I behold men, mere crawlers on this atom, the earth, which is but a point in the universe, proposing themselves as exact models for Providence, I know not how to harmonize such extravagance with such littleness.

PARIS, the 14th of the moon of Saphar, 1714.

LETTER LX

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

YOU ask me if there are Jews in France. Know that wherever there is money, there are Jews. You ask me what they do. Exactly what they do in Persia: nothing is liker an Asiatic Jew than a European one.

They exhibit among the Christians, as among ourselves, an invincible attachment to their religion, amounting to folly.

The Jewish religion is like the trunk of an old tree which has produced two branches that cover the whole earth — I mean Mohammedanism and Christianity: or rather, she is the mother of two daughters that have loaded her with a thousand bruises;* for, in religious matters, the nearest relations are the bitterest foes. But however badly her daughters have treated her, she ceases not to glory in having brought them forth: she has made use of both of

* Voltaire, in his article on the Jews in the "Philosophical Dictionary," has reproduced this idea of Montesquieu's without acknowledging it.

them to encircle the whole earth, just as her venerable age embraces all time.

The Jews therefore regard themselves as the fountain of all holiness, the source of all religion: us they look upon as heretics who have changed the law, or rather as rebel Jews.

If the change had been made gradually, they imagine that they might have been easily led away; but as it took place suddenly, and with violence, and as they can mark the day and the hour of the birth of both daughters, they mock at religions that have had beginnings, and cling to one that is older than the world itself.

They have never been freer from molestation in Europe than they are now. Christians are beginning to lose the spirit of intolerance which animated them: experience has shown the error of the expulsion of the Jews from Spain, and of the persecution of those Christians in France whose belief differed a little from that of the king. They have realized that zeal for the advancement of religion is different from a due attachment to it; and that in order to love it and fulfill its behests, it is not necessary to hate and persecute those who are opposed to it.

It is much to be desired that our Mussulmans regarded this matter as rationally as the Christians, and that peace were established in all good faith between Hali and Abubeker,* leaving God to decide the merits of these holy prophets. I would have them honored by acts of veneration and respect, and not by foolish preferences. Let us seek to merit their favor, whatever place God has given them; whether it be at His right hand, or beneath the footstool of His throne.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Saphar, 1714.

*Abu Bekr, father-in-law of Mohammed, was proclaimed Caliph on the death of the prophet, in 632. According to the Persians, this nomination was a usurpation of the rights of Ali, the cousin and son-in-law of Mohammed. (See Note, p. 36.)

LETTER LXI

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

I WENT the other day into a famous church called Notre Dame. While I was admiring this magnificent building I had an opportunity of conversing with an ecclesiastic, led there, like myself, by curiosity. The conversation turned upon the peaceful life enjoyed by those of his profession. "Most people," said he, "envy the happiness of our condition, and they are right. However, it has its disadvantages: although we are in a measure separated from the world, yet a thousand things require our presence in it; and in this way we have a very difficult part to fill.

"Worldly people are truly astonishing: they can endure neither our praise nor our blame: if we desire to admonish them, they think us ridiculous; if to commend them, they regard us as undignified. Nothing can be more humiliating than the thought that one has offended even the wicked. We are therefore compelled to adopt an ambiguous method, and to influence libertines, not by a direct appeal, but by the uncertainty in which our manner of receiving their remarks leaves them. This requires abundance of talent, it is so difficult to maintain a neutral attitude: men of the world who risk everything, who give themselves up to all their fancies, dropping them or pursuing them, according to their felicity, succeed much better.

"This is not all. We cannot preserve in the world that happy peaceful state which is so loudly praised. As soon as we appear there, we are forced into argument: for example, we have to undertake to prove to a man who does not believe in God, the efficacy of prayer; or the necessity of fasting, to another who all his life has denied the immortality of the soul: the task is heavy, and the laughter is not on our side. Besides this, a desire to convert others to our own opinions, which belongs, as it were, to our profession, torments us endlessly; and is as ridiculous as if Europeans, anxious to improve human nature, were to try to change the Ethiopian's skin. We disturb the state, and

torment ourselves to enforce points of religion which are not fundamental: we are like that conqueror of China, who drove his subjects to a general revolt, by insisting that they should cut their hair or their nails.

"The zeal which we have to secure the fulfillment of the duties of our holy religion on the part of those over whom we are placed, is often dangerous, and cannot be accompanied by too much prudence. An emperor, called Theodosius, put to the sword all the inhabitants of a certain town, even to the women and children. Immediately afterward, as he was about to enter a church, a bishop, Ambrose by name, shut the doors against him as a sacrilegious murderer: in doing so he performed an heroic action. This emperor, having shortly done the penance which such a crime required, and being admitted into the church, the same bishop made him come from among the priests with whom he had seated himself: that was the action of a fanatic. Thus you see how true it is, that one should not be over-zealous. Of what importance was it to religion or to the state, whether this prince had, or had not, a place among the priests?"

PARIS, the 1st of the first moon of Rebiab, 1714.

LETTER LXII

ZELIS TO USBEK, AT PARIS

YOUR daughter having attained her seventh year, I have judged it time to remove her to the inner apartments of the seraglio, and not to wait till she should be ten to intrust her to the care of the black eunuchs. It is impossible to deprive a young girl too soon of the liberty of childhood, and to give her a holy upbringing within those walls sacred to modesty.

For I am not of the opinion of those mothers who only sequester their daughters when they are about to bestow them in marriage, who sentence, rather than consecrate

them, to the seraglio, and force them to embrace a manner of life which they ought to have taught them to love. Must we expect everything from the compulsion of reason, and leave nothing to the gentle influences of habit?

We are in vain told of the state of subjection in which nature has placed us. It is not enough to make us realize this; we must be made to practice submission, in order that we may be upheld at that critical time when the passions begin to awaken, and that we may learn voluntary subordination.

Were we only attached to you by duty, we might sometimes forget it; or if it were inclination alone that bound us, a more potent feeling might perhaps weaken it. But, when the laws bestow us on one man they withdraw us from all others, and place us as far from them as if a hundred thousand leagues intervened.

Nature, diligent in the service of men, has been no niggard in her dowry of desire; to women also she has not been unkind, and has destined us to be the living instruments of the enjoyment of our masters; she has set us on fire with passion in order that they may live at ease; should they quit their insensibility, she has provided us to restore them to it, without our ever being able to taste the happiness of the condition into which we put them.

Yet, Usbek, do not think that your situation is happier than mine; I have experienced here a thousand pleasures unknown to you. My imagination has labored without ceasing to make me conscious of their worth; I have lived, and you have only languished.

Even in this prison where you keep me I am freer than you. You can only redouble your care in guarding me, that I may rejoice at your uneasiness; and your suspicions, your jealousy, your annoyance, are so many marks of your dependence.

Continue, dear Usbek, to have me watched night and day; take no ordinary precautions; increase my happiness in assuring your own; and know, that I dread nothing except your indifference.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 2d of the first moon of Rebiab, 1714.

LETTER LXIII

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

DO YOU mean to spend your whole life in the country? At first I was to lose you only for a day or two, but now fifteen have passed since I last saw you. I know that you are living in a delightful house where the company suits you, where you can speculate at your ease: nothing more is required to make you forget the whole universe.

For myself, my life moves on pretty much as it did when we were together. I go into society and try to understand it; my thought loses gradually all that remained of its Asiatic cast, and conforms without effort to European manners. I am no longer amazed to find in one house half a dozen women with as many men; indeed, I begin to think it not altogether a bad idea.

This I will say: I knew nothing of women until I came here; I have learned more about them in one month of Paris, than I could have done in thirty years of a seraglio.

With us, character is uniform, because it is constrained; we do not see people as they are, but as they are obliged to be; in that slavery of heart and mind, it is only fear that utters a dull routine of words, very different from the language of nature which expresses itself so variously.

Dissimulation, that art so practiced and so necessary with us, is here unknown; they say everything, see everything, and hear everything; hearts are as open as faces; in manners, in virtue, even in vice, one detects always a certain artlessness.

In order to gratify women a talent is necessary different from that other gift which pleases them still more; it consists in a sort of playfulness of mind, which entertains them, as it seems to promise them every moment what one cannot perform except occasionally.

This gayety of mind naturally adapted to the dressing-room * seems to be forming the general character of the nation: they trifle in council, at the head of an army, with an ambassador. Professions appear ridiculous only in proportion to the professional gravity adopted: a doctor would be less absurd if his dress were more cheerful, and if, while killing his patients, he jested pleasantly.

PARIS, the 10th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1714.

LETTER LXIV

THE CHIEF OF THE BLACK EUNUCHS TO USBEK, AT PARIS

I CANNOT tell you, magnificent lord, how deeply perplexed I am. Appaling disorder and confusion prevail in the seraglio: war reigns among your wives; your eunuchs are divided; nothing is heard but murmurs, complaints, reproaches; my remonstrances are despised: everything seems to be permitted in this time of license, and I am nothing but a name in the seraglio.

There is not one of your wives who does not deem herself superior to the others by her birth, her beauty, her wealth, her intellect, or her love; and who does not claim every preference on the score of the value she sets upon one or other of these titles to respect. I lose every moment that long-suffering patience, with which, nevertheless, I have had the misfortune to displease them all: my prudence, even my kindness, so rare and strange a virtue in the post which I occupy, have been useless.

Is it your pleasure that I should disclose to you, magnificent lord, the cause of all these disorders? It is in your heart alone, in the tender affection which you have for them. If you did not withhold my hand; if, instead of remonstrating, you would allow me to punish; if, rather than suffer them to soften you by their complaints and

* Drawing-room we would say to-day. In the eighteenth century it was in their elegant *cabinets de toilette* that ladies received visitors.

tears, you would send them to weep before me, whom nothing can move, I would soon fashion them to the yoke they ought to bear, and weary out this proud and independent temper.

Stolen, at the age of fifteen years, out of the heart of Africa, my native country, I was at first sold to a master, who had more than twenty wives, or concubines. Judging from my grave and taciturn air, that I would be an acquisition in the seraglio, he ordered that I should be prepared for it, and made me undergo an operation, painful at first, but fortunate in its results, because it has given me the ear and the confidence of my masters. I entered the seraglio, to me a new world. The first eunuch, the sternest man I ever knew, governed there with undisputed sway. Nothing was ever heard of divisions or of quarrels: profound silence reigned everywhere: all these women were put to bed at the same hour, and wakened at the same hour, from one year's end to the other: they entered the bath in turn, and left it at the slightest sign made by us: the rest of the time they were almost always shut up in their rooms. He had one rule, which exacted the observance of the greatest neatness, and he was in this matter inexpressibly careful: the least refusal of obedience was punished without mercy. "I am," said he, "a slave; but the slave of a man who is your master and mine; and I use the power which he has given me over you: it is he who chastises you, not I; I only lend my hand." These women never entered my master's chamber but when they were summoned; that favor they welcomed gladly, and saw themselves deprived of it without a murmur. As for myself, the least of the blacks in that peaceful seraglio, I was a thousand times more respected than I am in yours, where I command all.

As soon as the chief eunuch had recognized my genius, he regarded me with favor, and spoke of me to his master as of one able to carry out his views, and to succeed him in the post which he filled: he was not afraid of my great youth, believing that my application would make up for my want of experience. Shall I tell you? I advanced so rapidly in his confidence that he went the length of intrusting

me with the keys of those dreadful places, which he had guarded for so long a time. It was under this great master that I learned the difficult art of commanding, and that I was formed according to the maxims of an inflexible government: I studied under him the heart of women: he taught me to take advantage of their weaknesses, and not to be dismayed by their arrogance. Often he amused himself by watching me drive their obedience to the very last verge; he then made them return gradually, and required that I for some time should appear to yield. But he should have been seen at those times when, now beseeching, now reproaching, they were driven almost to despair: he beheld their tears unmoved, rejoicing in his triumph. "See," said he, with a satisfied air, "how women must be governed: their number does not trouble me; I could manage in the same way all those of our great king. How can a man hope to win their hearts, if his faithful eunuchs have not begun by breaking their spirits?"

He was not only a man of resolution, but also of penetration. He read their thoughts and their dissemblings: their studied gestures, their made-up looks, concealed nothing from him. He knew all their most hidden actions, their most secret words. He obtained his information by making them tell on each other; and it was his pleasure to reward the most insignificant confidence. As they never approached their husband except when they were ordered, the eunuch summoned whom he liked, and directed the attention of his master to those whom he wished to please; and this distinction was the reward for the revelation of some secret. He had persuaded his master that it was of the first importance that the choice should be left to him, as it would give his authority much greater weight. That was the method of government, magnificent lord, in a seraglio, which was, I believe, the best regulated in all Persia.

Give me a free hand, allow me to make myself obeyed, and eight days will see order take the place of confusion; this, your glory demands, and your safety requires.

Your Seraglio at Ispahan, the 9th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1714.

LETTER LXV

USBEK TO HIS WIVES, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN

I UNDERSTAND that the seraglio at Ispahan is in disorder, that it is full of quarrels, and intestine divisions. At my departure did I not recommend you to be at peace and maintain a good understanding?

You promised this; was it to deceive me?

It is you who will be deceived, if I choose to follow the counsels of the chief eunuch; if I choose to employ my authority to make you live as I exhorted you to do.

I do not, however, see why I should make use of those violent means until I have tried all others. Do, then, for your own sakes, what you have not cared to do for mine.

The first eunuch has a great subject of complaint: he says that you pay no attention to him. How can you harmonize that behavior with the modesty which should belong to your condition? Is not your virtue confided to him during my absence? It is a sacred treasure, of which he is the guardian. But the contempt with which you treat him, makes it apparent that those who are charged to lead you in the paths of honor are irksome to you.

Change your behavior then, I beg you; and see to it that I may be able still to reject the proposals which have been made to me against your freedom and your tranquillity.

For I wish you to forget that I am your master, and to be remembered only as your husband.

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXVI

RICA TO * * *

PEOPLE are very much devoted to the sciences here, but I question if they are very learned. He who, as a philosopher, doubts of all, dare deny nothing as a theologian: the inconsistent man is always well pleased with himself provided you agree with him.

The passion of nearly every Frenchman, is to pass for a wit; and the passion of those who wish to be thought wits, is to write books.

There never was such an erroneous idea: it seems to be a wise provision of nature that the follies of men should be short lived; but books interfere and immortalize them. A fool, not content with having bored all those who have lived with him, insists on tormenting generations to come; he would have his folly triumph over oblivion, which should have been as welcome to him as death; he wishes posterity to be informed of his existence, and he would have it remembered forever that he was a fool.

Of all authors, there are none whom I despise more than compilers. They crowd from all quarters to pick up the shreds of other men's works; these they fit into their own, as one would patch the turf of a lawn: they are not one whit superior to the compositor, whose typesetting may be called bookmaking if manual labor is all. I would have original books respected; and it seems to me a species of profanation, to take from them the matter of which they are composed, as if from a sanctuary, and exposed it to an undeserved contempt.

When a man has nothing new to say, why can't he be quiet? Why should one be troubled with these useless repetitions? But I will give you a new illustration. You are a man of ability! You come into my library; and you shift the books from the lower shelves to the upper ones, and from the upper to the lower: you have produced a masterpiece!

I write you, . . . , because I am exasperated with a book which I have just laid down — a book so big that it seems to contain all science: but it has only split my head without putting anything into it. Farewell.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXVII

IBBEN TO USBEK, AT PARIS

THREE vessels have arrived here without bringing any news from you. Are you ill, or does it amuse you to make me uneasy?

If you do not love me in a country where you are quite unfettered, how will it be in the middle of Persia, and in the bosom of your family? But perhaps I am wrong: you are charming enough to find friends everywhere; the heart is a native of all lands: what should hinder a generous nature from forming attachments? I confess, I respect old friendships; but I am quite well pleased to make new ones everywhere.

In whatever country I have been, I have lived as if I were to spend the rest of my days there: I have had the same strong liking for virtuous people, the same pity, or I should say the same love, for the wretched, and the same esteem for those whom prosperity has not blinded. That is my character, Usbek: wherever I find men, I choose friends.

There is here a Guebre* who I believe, after you, holds the chief place in my heart: he is the very soul of honor. Special reasons have obliged him to retire to this town, where, with his beloved wife, he lives peacefully on the earnings of an honest trade. A generous temper has distinguished him all his life; and although he prefers obscurity,

* Guebre, or infidel, the name applied to the fire-worshipers, descended from the immediate followers of Zoroaster. According to Dr. C. J. Wills, in his "Persia as It Is," there are only about 8,000 Guebres left in Persia, and these are congregated at Yezd.

there is more of true heroism in him than in many of the greatest monarchs.

I have often spoken to him of you, and I show him all your letters. I note that this gives him great pleasure, and I perceive already that you have a friend, who is unknown to you.

Here you will find his principal adventures. Although he was very reluctant to write them, he can refuse nothing to my friendship, and I confide them to yours.

The History of Apheridon and Astarte

I was born among the Guebres, whose religion is perhaps the oldest in the world. My misfortunes began, when, at the age of six, love dawned in me before reason, and I could not live without my sister. My eyes were always fixed on her, and if she left me for a moment, she found me, on returning, bathed in tears: each new day added not more to my age than to my love. My father, astonished at such strength of feeling, was quite willing that we should be married, according to the ancient custom of the Guebres, introduced by Cambyses;* but fear of the Mohammedans, under whose yoke we lived, prevented our people from thinking of those holy alliances, which our religion orders rather than permits, and which are such innocent reflections of a union already formed by nature.

My father, seeing how dangerous it would be to follow my inclination, which was also his, determined to extinguish a flame, believed by him to be newly lit, but which was already at its height. Under pretext of a voyage, he took me away, leaving my sister in the hands of a relative; for my mother had been dead for two years. I cannot describe the misery of that separation: I embraced my sister, she all bathed in tears, but I, dry-eyed; for grief had made me callous. We arrived at Tiflis; my father, having intrusted my education to one of our relatives, left me, and returned home.

*A fabulous Cambyses, father of Hystaspes, or Gustaspes, King of Persia, under whom Zoroaster lived. Cambyses, under the name of Hohoraspes, and his son are referred to further on in this letter.

Some time after, I learned that, through the influence of one of his friends, he had placed my sister in the harem of the king to wait upon a sultana. Had I been told of her death, I could not have been more overcome; for, apart from the fact that I could never hope to see her again, her entrance into the harem had made her a Mohammedan, and according to the superstition of that religion she could only regard me with horror. Nevertheless, unable to live longer at Tiflis, tired of myself and of life, I returned to Ispahan. My first words to my father were acrimonious; I reproached him with having placed his daughter in a place which could not be entered without a change in religion. "You have drawn upon your family," said I to him, "the anger of God and of the Sun which lights you: you have done more wrong than if you had polluted the elements, inasmuch as you have polluted the soul of your daughter, which is not less pure: I shall die of grief and of love; and may my death be the only calamity which God will make you suffer!" With these words I went away; and for two years I spent my life staring at the walls of the harem, and wondering in which part of it my sister might be, in danger every day of having my throat cut by the eunuchs, who walk their rounds about that dread place.

At last my father died; and the sultana whom my sister served, seeing that she grew in beauty every day, became jealous, and married her to a eunuch who was passionately in love with her. In this way my sister left the seraglio, and occupied with her eunuch a house in Ispahan.

It was three months before I was able to get speech of her, the eunuch, the most jealous of men, always putting me off with various excuses. But at last I was admitted to his harem, where I had to talk to my sister through a lattice. She was so closely wrapped in robes and veils that the eyes of a lynx could not have discovered anything, and I could recognize her only by the sound of her voice. My emotion was overpowering when I found myself so close to her, and yet so far away. I restrained myself, however, for I was watched. As for her, she seemed to shed a few tears. Her husband offered some kind of halting apology;

but I treated him like the least of his slaves. He was very much annoyed when he heard me speak to my sister in a tongue unknown to him. It was ancient Persian I used, the language of our religion. "What, my sister!" cried I, "is it true that you have renounced the worship of your fathers? I know that, in entering a harem, you must perforce profess Mohammedanism; but, tell me, did your heart agree with your lips in renouncing the religion which permits me to love you? And for whom have you renounced that religion which should be so dear to us? For a wretch still branded with the marks of slavery; who, if he were a man, would be the basest of his kind." "Brother," said she, "this man of whom you speak is my husband; it is my duty to honor him, all unworthy as he may appear to you; and it is I who would be the basest of women, if . . ." "Ah! my sister," said I, "you are a Guebre: this man is not, and can never be, your husband. Had you kept the faith like your fathers, you would regard him only as a monster." "Alas!" said she, "how far removed from me that religion seems now! I had hardly learned its precepts when I was obliged to forget them. You hear that this language which I speak to you is no longer familiar to me, and that I have the greatest difficulty in expressing myself. But remember that I cherish always the exquisite memory of our childhood; that since then I have known only the mockery of happiness; that not a day has passed in which I have not thought of you; that you have had a greater share in my marriage than you imagine, for it was the hope of seeing you again that won my consent to it. But this day, which has cost me so much, will cost me more yet! I see you beside yourself with passion, and my husband quivers with rage and jealousy. I will never see you more; I speak to you without a doubt for the last time in my life; and if that be so, my brother, I know it will not be a long one." She melted at these words; and finding herself unable to continue the conversation, she left me, the most disconsolate of men.

Three or four days afterward I asked to see my sister. The brutish eunuch would have been very glad to prevent

me; but, besides the fact that husbands of that kind have not so much power over their wives as others, he loved my sister so frantically, that he could refuse her nothing. I saw her again in the same place, veiled as before, and accompanied by two slaves, and was compelled to resort to our own language. "My sister," said I, "how is it that I cannot see you except in these horrible circumstances? The walls which keep you imprisoned, these bolts and gratings, these miserable guards who watch you, drive me mad. How have you lost the sweet freedom in which your ancestors rejoiced? Your mother, who was so chaste, gave to her husband, as the sole pledge of her virtue, that virtue itself: they lived happy in each other, and in their mutual confidence; and the simplicity of their manners was to them a thousand times more precious than the false splendor which you seem to enjoy in this sumptuous house. In losing your religion, you have lost your liberty, your happiness, and that precious equality which is the honor of your sex. But there is something much worse behind; and that is, the thing which you are — not the wife, for that you cannot be, but the slave of a slave, who has been degraded from humanity." "Ah, my brother!" said she, "have respect for my husband, for the religion which I have embraced: according to that religion, I cannot listen, I cannot speak, to you without sin." "What, my sister!" said I, trembling with emotion, "then you believe that religion, you think it true!" "Ah!" said she, "how much better it would be for me if it were not true! I have made too great a sacrifice for it, not to believe in it; and if my doubts . . ." At these words she became silent. "Yes, my sister, your doubts! They are well founded, whatever they may be. What can you expect from a religion which makes you miserable in this world, and leaves you no hope for the next? Remember that our religion is the most ancient in the world; that it has always flourished in Persia, and that it originated with the Persian empire, the beginnings of which are beyond human ken; that it is only chance that has introduced Mohammedanism here; that that sect has been established, not by the power of persuasion, but by conquest. If our native princes had not been weak,

you would have beheld the worship of those ancient Magi* reigning still. Transport yourself into those remote ages: everything will speak to you of Magism, and nothing of the Mohammedan sect which, many thousands of years after, was not even in its infancy." "But," said she, "although my religion may be more modern than yours, it is at least purer, since it adores but one God; while you still worship the sun, the stars, fire, and even the elements." "I perceive, my sister, that you have learned among the Mussulmans to slander our holy religion. We adore neither the stars nor the elements; and our fathers did not adore them: they never built temples to them, nor offered sacrifices in their honor: they yielded only such inferior reverence as is due to the works and manifestations of the Deity. But, my sister, in the name of God who is our light, accept this sacred volume which I have brought you: it is the book of our lawgiver, Zoroaster: read it without prejudice, and receive into your heart the light which will shine upon you: remember your fathers, who for so long a time honored the sun in the holy city of Balk ;† and, finally, do not forget me, whose hopes of peace, of fortune, and of life, depend upon your conversion." Transported by my feelings, I went away, and left her to decide alone the most momentous event of my life.

I returned to her in two days. I did not speak ; I waited in silence the sentence of life or death. "You are loved, my brother," she said, "and by a Guebre. I have resisted long; but, ye gods! what difficulties love can overcome! A load has fallen from me! I am no longer afraid that I may love you too much; there is no limit to my passion now that excess itself is lawful. Ah! how sweetly that thought chimes with my happy heart! But you, who have found a way to break the chains which my soul had forged for itself, when will you break those which fetter my hands? From this moment I give myself to you: show by the speed

*The caste of hereditary priests under the Medes and Persians. Zoroaster reformed their religious doctrines and ceremonies.

† The ancient Bactra. The Arch-mage resided there till the followers of Zoroaster were overcome by the Caliphs.

with which you take me how dear the gift is. My brother, when I shall embrace you for the first time, I think I shall die in your arms." I can never fully express the joy which I felt at these words; I believed myself, and actually saw myself, in one instant, the happiest of men: I beheld almost fulfilled all the desires which I had formed in my twenty-five years of life, and the disappearance of all the misery which had made it so hard. But, when I had grown somewhat accustomed to these delightful thoughts, I perceived that I was not so near my happiness, as I had on the firs blush imagined, although I had overcome the chief obstacle in my path. It would be necessary to evade the watchfulness of her guards; I dared not confide to any one the secret of my life; I had only my sister, and she had only me: if my attempt failed, I ran the risk of being impaled; but no torture seemed so cruel as to be without her. We arranged that she should send to me for a timepiece which her father had left her; and that I should put inside it a file, to cut the lattice of the window which opened on the street, and a knotted rope by which to descend; that thereafter I should cease to visit her, but should wait every night under her window until she could execute her design. I passed fifteen entire nights without seeing any one, because she had not found a favorable opportunity. At length, on the sixteenth, I heard the rasping of the file: from time to time the work was interrupted, and in the intervals my dread was inexpressible. After an hour's labor, I saw her fasten the rope; she let herself go, and slid into my arms. All danger was forgotten, and for a long time we stood there motionless. Then I led her out of the city to a spot where I had a horse all ready: I lifted her to the croup behind me, and fled with all imaginable speed from a neighborhood which might have been so disastrous to us. We arrived before morning at the house of a Guebre, in a lonely place to which he had retired, living frugally on the produce of his own labor. We did not think it wise to stay with him, and by his advice we entered a dense forest, where we lodged in the hollow of an old oak, until the rumor of our flight had died away. We lived together in this out-of-the-way abode, unseen of any, telling our love

over and over again to each other, and waiting until the ceremony of marriage, prescribed by our religion, could be performed by a Guebre priest. "My sister," said I, "how holy is that union! Nature has joined us, and our holy law will join us in another bond." At last a priest came to quiet the impatience of our love. In the house of the peasant he performed all the ceremonies of marriage; he blessed us, and wished us a thousand times the vigor of Gustaspes, and the holiness of Hohoraspes. Soon after we left Persia, where we were not safe, and retired into Georgia. We lived there a year, and every day increased the pleasure we found in each other's company. But when my money was nearly done, fearing misery for my sister, not for myself, I left her to seek help from our relatives. Never was a parting more tender. My journey, however, was not only useless, but disastrous. For, having found all our goods confiscated, and my relatives almost powerless to aid me, I brought away with me no more money than sufficed for my return. But, imagine my despair! My sister was not to be found. Some days before my arrival the Tartars had invaded the city where she was, and finding her beautiful, had seized her, and sold her to some Jews who were bound for Turkey, leaving me only a little daughter born some months before. I followed these Jews, and overtook them three leagues off. In vain I besought them with tears, they persisted in demanding thirty *tomans*,* and would not bate a single coin.

Having gone to everybody, and having begged the aid of both the Christian and the Turkish priests, I applied to an Armenian merchant: to him I sold my daughter and myself for thirty-five *tomans*. I went to the Jews, gave them their thirty *tomans*, and carried the other five to my sister, whom I had not yet seen. "You are free," said I, "my sister, and I can embrace you. Here are five *tomans* I have brought; I am sorry they would not buy me for more." "What!" cried she, "you have sold yourself?" "Yes," replied I. "Ah! wretched man, what have you done? Was I not miserable enough, that you should make me more so? Your freedom was my comfort; your bondage will bring me

*A *toman* is equal to a little more than eighteen shillings.

to the grave. Ah! my brother, how cruel your love is! and my daughter? I do not see her!" "I have sold her too," said I. We both burst into tears, and were unable to utter a single word. At last I had to return to my master. My sister was with him almost as soon as I. She threw herself at his feet saying, "I beg from you slavery as others ask for freedom: take me, you can sell me for a greater sum than my husband." Then there took place a struggle which drew tears from my master's eyes. "Unhappy man!" said she, "did you think that I would accept my liberty at the cost of yours? Master, you behold two unfortunates who will die if you separate them. I give myself to you; pay me: perhaps that money and my services will some day obtain from you what I dare not now ask. It is for your own interest not to separate us: his life depends on me." The Armenian, a humane man, was touched by our woes: "Serve me, both of you, with fidelity and zeal, and I promise you that in a year I will give you your freedom. I see that neither of you deserve the wretchedness of your lot. If, when you become free, your happiness is as great as your merit, and fortune smiles upon you, I am certain that you will repay me that which I shall lose." We both embraced his knees, and attended him on his journey. We comforted each other in our servile tasks; and I was delighted when I could do the work which fell to my sister's share.

The end of the year arrived; our master kept his word and set us free. We returned to Tiflis. There I found an old friend of my father's, who practiced successfully as a physician in that city. He lent me some money with which I traded. Some business called me shortly after to Smyrna, where I established myself. I have lived there for six years in the enjoyment of the most amiable and agreeable society in the world. Unity reigns in my family, and I would not change my lot for that of all the kings of the earth. I have been fortunate enough to meet again the Armenian merchant, to whom I owe all; and I have been able to render him some important services.

SMYRNA, the 27th of the second moon
of Gemmadi, 1714.

LETTER LXVIII

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

THE other day I dined at the house of a magistrate, who had often invited me. After we had talked of a variety of things, I said to him, "Sir, it appears to me that your profession is very laborious." "Not so much as you imagine," he rejoined; "as we prosecute it, it is only an amusement." "But how! is your head not always full of other people's business? are you not always occupied with matters that do not interest you?" "You are right; these matters do not interest us, because we take not the least interest in them; and that is how our profession is not so fatiguing as you supposed." When I saw that he took the matter so carelessly, I continued, and said, "Sir, I have not seen your study." "I believe you; for I have none. When I took this post, lacking the money to pay for it, I sold my library. The bookseller who bought it, out of a vast number of volumes, left me only my account book. Nor do I regret them: we judges have no need to stuff our heads with useless knowledge. What have we to do with all these legal volumes? Almost all the cases are questions of fact, and outside the general rule." "But, sir, may it not be because you make them so? For, in short, why should all the peoples of the world have laws, if these laws are not to be applied? And how can one who does not know them, apply them?" "If you were acquainted with the courts of justice," replied the magistrate, "you would not speak as you do. We have living books, the advocates: they work for us, and take upon themselves the task of instructing us." "And do they not also sometimes take upon themselves the task of deceiving you?" I retorted. "It would not be a bad thing to guard yourself against their wiles. They have weapons with which to attack your justice: it would be well if you were in a condition to defend it: you ought not to rush into the midst of the fight, thinly clad, among people armed to the teeth."

PARIS, the 13th of the moon of
Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXIX

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

You would never have dreamed that I could become a greater metaphysician than I was. Such is the case, however; and you will be convinced of it, when you have waded through this flood of my philosophy.

The most sensible of those philosophers, who have considered the nature of God, have declared that He is a being supremely perfect; but they have sadly abused this idea. They have tabulated all the various perfections which man is capable of possessing and of imagining, and with these they have clad the idea of God, not thinking that these attributes are often contradictory, and, being mutually destructive, cannot subsist in the same individual.

The western poets tell how a painter,* wishing to make a likeness of the goddess of beauty, gathered together the most beautiful Greek women, and, having taken from each that grace in which she most excelled, combined their selected charms into a picture of the loveliest of the goddesses. If, on that account, a man should think that she was both fair and dark, that her eyes were black and blue, and that she was, at one and the same time, sweet tempered and haughty, he would pass for a fool.

God often falls short of a perfection which would make Him very imperfect: but He is never limited except by Himself; He is His own law. Thus, although God is all-powerful, He can neither break His promises, nor deceive men. Often too, His impotence is not subjective, but objective; and that is the reason why He cannot change the nature of things.

So, also, it is not so very wonderful that some of our learned men should have denied the infinite foreknowledge of God, upon the principle that it is incompatible with His justice.

However bold this idea may be, it is countenanced remarkably by metaphysics. According to metaphysical

*Zeuxis, when he painted Helen for the Agrigentines.

principles, it is impossible that God should foresee such things as depend upon the determination of free causes; because that which has not happened does not exist, and consequently, cannot be known; for nothing, having no properties, cannot be perceived: God cannot read a will which does not exist, nor discern in the mind what it does not contain, for, until the mind is made up, the thing determined on is not in it.

The mind is the author of its determination; but there are occasions when it is so irresolute, that it does not even know for which side to determine. Often indeed it makes a selection only to use its liberty; in such a manner that God cannot foresee its choice, neither in its own action, nor in the operation of objects upon it.

How could God foresee things which depend upon the determination of free causes? He could only see them in two ways: by conjecture, which is incompatible with His infinite foreknowledge; or He could see them as necessary effects proceeding infallibly from a cause which produces them as infallibly — a method even more at variance with divine foreknowledge, for it supposes that the mind is free, with a freedom, however, no greater than that of a billiard ball, which is at liberty to move when it is struck by another.

Do not think, however, that I wish to limit God's knowledge. Since He directs the actions of His creatures according to His pleasure, He knows all that He wishes to know. But although He can see everything, He does not always make use of that power: He generally leaves man the power to do a thing or to leave it alone, in order that he may be able to choose between right and wrong; and this is why God renounces the absolute authority which He has over the mind. But, when He desires to know anything, He always knows it, because He has only to will that a thing shall happen as He sees it, and to make His creatures conform to His will. It is thus that He selects what shall happen from the number of mere possibilities, fixing by His decrees the future determinations of men's minds, and depriving them of the power which He gave them to do or not to do.

Let me employ a comparison in a matter which transcends all comparisons: — A monarch, ignorant of what his ambassador will do in an important affair, if he wishes to know, has only to command him to conduct the negotiation in such or such a manner, and he will be certain that the thing will happen as he planned it.

The Koran and the Hebrew books are constant witnesses against the dogma of absolute foreknowledge: God appears throughout these writings as ignorant of the future determinations of men's minds; and it seems that this was the first truth that Moses taught mankind.

God placed Adam in the terrestrial paradise, on condition that he should not eat of a certain fruit: an absurd command to be given by a being acquainted with the future determination of men's minds; for, in short, could such a being make His favor depend on such conditions, without rendering it ridiculous? [illegible] was aware of the capture of Bagdad should say to [illegible] "I will give you a [illegible]." Would that not be a very sorry jest?

My dear Rhedi, why all this philosophy? God is so far above us that we cannot perceive even His clouds. We have no knowledge of Him except in His commandments. He is a spirit immense and infinite. May his greatness make us conscious of our own weakness! To humble ourselves [illegible] is to adore Him continually.

[illegible]

THE SWORD DANCE

Photogravure after the painting by Gérome.

LETTER LXX

[illegible] TO [illegible], AT PARIS

SOLIMAN, whom you love, has been driven [illegible] by an affront which he has just received. Three months ago a young [illegible] sought his daughter in marriage; he [illegible] the girl's appearance from the report and [illegible] given him by the

* This paragraph appeared first in the edition of 1754.

Let me employ a comparison in a matter which transcends all comparisons: — A monarch, ignorant of what his ambassador will do in an important affair, if he wishes to know, has only to command him to conduct the negotiation in such or such a manner, and he will be certain that the thing will happen as he planned it.

The Koran and the Hebrew books are constant witnesses against the dogma of absolute foreknowledge: God appears throughout these writings as ignorant of the future determinations of men's minds: and it seems that this was the first truth that Moses taught mankind.

God placed Adam in the terrestrial paradise, on condition that he should not eat of a certain fruit: an absurd command to be given by a being acquainted with the future determination's of men's minds; for, in short, could such a being make His favor depend on such conditions, without rendering it ridiculous? It is as if a man who was aware of the capture of Bagdad should say to another, "I will give you a hundred *tomans* if Bagdad is not taken."* Would that not be a very sorry jest?

My dear Rhedi, why all this philosophy? God is so far above us that we cannot perceive even His clouds. We have no knowledge of Him except in His commandments. He is a spirit, immense and infinite. May his greatness make us conscious of our own weakness. To humble ourselves continually, is to adore Him continually.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of Chahban, 1714.

LETTER LXX

ZELIS TO USBEK, AT PARIS

SOLIMAN, whom you love, has been driven desperate by an affront which he has just received. Three months ago a young giddypate, named Suphis, sought his daughter in marriage; he seemed satisfied with the girl's appearance from the report and description given him by the

* This paragraph appeared first in the edition of 1754.

women who had been with her during her childhood; the dowry had been agreed upon, and all was going well. Yesterday, after the first ceremonies, the girl set out on horseback, accompanied by her eunuch, and veiled, according to custom, from head to foot. But when she arrived at the house of her intended husband, he caused the door to be shut in her face, and swore that he would never receive her unless her dowry were increased. Her relatives hastened from all quarters to arrange the matter; and after a deal of resistance, Soliman agreed to make a small present to his son-in-law. The marriage ceremonies were completed, and the girl conducted to her husband's bed with sufficient violence; but, an hour after, this giddypate rose in a rage, cut her face in several places, and, declaring that she was not a virgin, sent her back to her father. No one could be more afflicted than he is by this injury. Many people maintain that the girl is innocent. Fathers are most unfortunate in being exposed to such affronts. If my daughter were to receive similar treatment, I believe I should die of grief. Farewell.

THE SERAGLIO AT FATME, the 9th of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1714.

LETTER LXXI

USBEK TO ZELIS

I AM sorry for Soliman, especially as his misfortune is without remedy, since his son-in-law has done no more than the law allows him. I think it a very harsh law, which exposes in this way the honor of a family to the caprice of a fool. It has been lightly said that there are sure signs whereby to know the truth: it is an old error from which we have now departed; and our physicians have supplied invincible reasons for the uncertainty of these proofs. Even among the Christians there are none who do not regard them as imaginary, although they are plainly established in their sacred writings, and although

their ancient lawgiver* has made the innocence or condemnation of all their daughters depend upon them.

I am pleased to know that you are giving great care to the education of yours. God grant that her husband may find her as lovely and as pure as Fatima;† may she have ten eunuchs to guard her; may she be the honor and the ornament of the seraglio to which she is destined; may she have overhead none but gilded ceilings, and under foot only the richest carpets! And, to crown these wishes, may my eyes see her in all her glory!

PARIS, the 3d of the moon of
Chalval, 1714.

LETTER LXXII

RICA TO IBBEN, AT * * *

I FOUND myself recently in a company where I met a man very well satisfied with himself. In a quarter of an hour, he decided three questions in morals, four historical problems, and five points in physics. I have never seen so universal a decider;‡ his mind was not once troubled with the least doubt. We left science and talked of the current news: he decided upon the current news. I wished to catch him, so I said to myself, "I must get to my strong point; I will betake me to my own country." I spoke to him of Persia; but hardly had I opened my mouth, when he contradicted me twice, basing his objections upon the authority of Tavernier and Chardin.§ "Ah! good heavens!" said I to myself, "what kind of man is this? He will know next all the streets in Ispahan better than I do!" I soon knew what part to play — to be silent, and let him talk; and he is still laying down the law.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of
Zilcade, 1715.

*Moses.— Deuteronomy, ch. xxii., v. 13–21.

†See Letter I, note, p. 31.

‡*Decisionnaire* in the original, a word invented by Montesquieu to describe a man who lays down the law upon everything.

§Tavernier (1605–89) and Chardin (1643–1713), the Persian travelers from whose books Montesquieu derived his knowledge of Persia.

LETTER LXXIII

RICA TO * * *

I HAVE heard much talk of a sort of court called the French Academy. There is no tribunal in the world which is less respected; for they say that no sooner does it issue a decree than the people break it, and substitute laws which the Academy is bound to follow.

Some time ago, in order to establish its authority, it issued a code of its decisions.* This child of so many fathers may be said to have been old when it was born; and although it was legitimate, a bastard,† born before it, nearly strangled it at its birth.

Those who compose this court have no other function than to jabber perpetually: eulogy suggests itself as the one subject of their incessant babble; and as soon as they are initiated into its mysteries, a frenzy of panegyric lays hold of them, and will not be shaken off.

This body has forty heads, all of them chokeful of tropes, of metaphors, and of antitheses; so that their lips scarcely ever open without an exclamation, and their ears are always waiting to be touched with rhythm and harmony. As for their eyes, they are out of the question; the Academy seems to be intended to talk and not to see. It is not firm on its legs; for time, which is its scourge, smites it incessantly and destroys all it does. It is said that at one time its hands were grasping; I have nothing to say on the subject, and will leave those to decide it who know more about it than I do.

Such eccentricities . . . are unknown in our Persia. We have no bent toward what is odd and extravagant; we endeavor to shape our simple customs and artless manners in the mold of nature.

PARIS, the 27th of the moon of Zilhage, 1715.

*The dictionary of the Academy.

†The dictionary of Furetière. The author was expelled from the Academy in 1685, because he was accused of having profited by the

LETTER LXXIV

USBEK TO RICA, AT * * *

SOME days ago a man of my acquaintance said to me, "I promised to introduce you to the best houses in Paris. I will take you now to that of a great lord who supports his rank as well as any man in France."

"What do you mean by that, sir? Is he more refined, more polite than others?" "No," said he. "Ah! I understand: he makes his superiority felt on all occasions by those who approach him. If that is it, I shall have nothing to do with him; I give up the whole case, and accept my inferiority."

I had, however, to go; and I saw a little man, supercilious to a degree. He took a pinch of snuff with such a haughty air, he blew his nose so mercilessly, he spat with such indifference, and caressed his dogs in a style so offensive to the onlookers, that I could not but marvel at him. "Ah! sweet Heaven!" said I to myself; "if, when I was at the court of Persia, I behaved in this way, I behaved like a great fool!" We would have been very inferior creatures, Rica, had we offered a hundred little insults to those people who waited upon us daily in token of their goodwill. They knew well that we were above them; and if they had not, our favors would have made them daily conscious of it. There being no need to secure their respect, we did our utmost to win their affection: we were accessible to the humblest; in the midst of our greatness, usually so hardening, they found we had feelings; only our hearts appeared to belong to a higher order; we descended to their wants. But, when it was necessary to support the dignity of our sovereign in public ceremonies, to make the nation worthy of respect in the eyes of strangers; and, lastly, when in times of danger, we required to animate our soldiers, our bearing became more lofty a hundred times

work of his fellow-Academicians in the composition of the dictionary which bears his name.

than it had been before lowly; we resumed our haughty looks; and not seldom we were found to play our part at least adequately.

PARIS, the 10th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXV

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

I MUST confess that I have not noticed in the Christians that lively faith in their religion which prevails among Mussulmans. With them there is a vast difference between profession and belief, between belief and conviction, between conviction and practice. Religion is not so much a matter of holiness as it is the subject of a debate, in which everybody has a right to join. Courtiers, warriors, women even, array themselves against the ecclesiastics, and insist upon their proving what they have made up their minds not to believe. Not that, willing to be guided by reason, they have taken the trouble to examine the falseness of that religion which they reject: they are rebels who have felt the yoke, and have shaken it off before knowing what it is. Nor are they any securer in their incredulity than in their faith: their life is a constant ebb and flow between belief and unbelief.* One of them said to me once, "I believe in the immortality of the soul for six months at a time; my opinions depend entirely upon my bodily condition: I am a Spinozist, a Socinian, a Catholic, ungodly or devout, according to the state of my animal spirits, the quality of my digestion, the rarity or heaviness of the air I breathe, the lightness or solidity of the food I eat. When the doctor is at my bedside, the confessor has me at a disadvantage. I know very well how to prevent religion from annoying me when I am in good health; but I allow

* All we have gained then by our unbelief
Is a life of doubt diversified by faith,
For one of faith diversified by doubt:
We called the chessboard white,— we call it black.
—BROWNING.

myself to be consoled by it when I am ill: when I have nothing more to hope for here below, religion offers itself, and gains me by its promises; I am glad to give myself up to it, and to die with hope on my side."

A long time ago the Christian princes enfranchised all the slaves in their dominions; because, said they, Christianity makes all men equal. It is true that this religious action was of great service to them, for by its means they diminished the power which the great lords exercised over the lower classes. Afterward, having made conquests in countries where they found it to their advantage to keep slaves,* they permitted them to be bought and sold, forgetting that religious principle which had moved them so strongly. What can one say? Truth at one time, error at another. Why should we not do like the Christians? We were very simple minded to reject settlement and easy conquests in pleasant climates,† because we could not find water pure enough to wash us according to the principles of our holy Koran. I give thanks to Almighty God, who sent His great prophet Hali, whence it is that I profess a religion which requires to be preferred before all human interests, and which is as pure as the sky from which it came.

PARIS, the 13th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXVI

USBEK TO HIS FRIEND IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

EUROPEAN law is dead against suicide. Those who kill themselves suffer, as it were, a second death: they are dragged with ignominy through the streets: their infamy is published, and their goods confiscated.

It seems to me, Ibben, that this law is very unjust. When I am loaded with grief, misery, and contumely,

* The French colonies.

† The Mohammedans had no wish to take Venice because they could not obtain water there suitable for their purifications.—(M.)

why should I be hindered from putting an end to my sufferings, and cruelly deprived of a remedy which is in my hands?

Why should I be forced to labor for a society to which I refuse to belong? why in spite of myself, should I be held to an agreement made without my consent? Society is founded upon mutual advantage; but, when it becomes burdensome to me, what hinders me from leaving it? Life was given me as a blessing; when it ceases to be so I can give it up: the cause ceasing, the effect ought also to cease.

Will any prince require me to be his subject, if I reap none of the benefits of subjection? Can my fellow-citizens require our lots to be so unequal; theirs, usefulness — mine, despair? Will God, unlike other benefactors, condemn me to receive favors which are a burden to me?

I am obliged to obey the laws while I live under them; but, if I cease to live, can they still bind me?

"But," some one may say, "you disturb the order of Providence. God has joined your soul to your body; in separating them, you oppose His designs and resist His will."

What force is there in this argument? Do I disturb the order of Providence, when I alter the qualities of matter, and square a ball which the first laws of motion, that is to say the laws of creation and preservation, made round? Certainly not; I only exercise a right which has been given me; and, in that sense, I can disturb, as my fancy dictates, the whole order of Nature, without any one being able to say that I oppose Providence.

When my soul shall be separated from my body, will there be less order, less harmony, in the universe? Do you think that that new combination will be less perfect, and less dependent upon general laws; that the world would lose anything by it; that the works of God would be less great, or rather less immense?

Do you think that my body, become a blade of grass, a worm, a grass-green turf, will be changed into a work of nature less worthy of her; and that my soul, freed from all its earthly trammels, will become less sublime?

All these ideas, my dear Ibben, have their only source in our pride. We do not feel our littleness; and, however small we may be, we wish to count for something in the universe, to cut a figure there, and to be of some consequence in it. We imagine that the annihilation of such a perfect being would degrade all nature: and we cannot conceive that one man more or less in the world — what do I say? — that the whole world, that a hundred millions of worlds* like ours, can be more than one small frail atom, which God perceives only because His knowledge is all-embracing.

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXVII†

IBBEN TO USBEK, AT PARIS

MY DEAR USBEK, it seems to me that, in the eyes of a true Mussulman, misfortunes are not so much punishments as warnings. Those are priceless days upon which we are led to atone for our offenses. It is the time of prosperity that ought to be curtailed. To what end is all our impatience, but to show us that we are seeking happiness, independently of Him who gives it, because He is happiness itself?

If a human creature is composed of two beings, and if the acknowledgment of the necessity of preserving their union is the chief mark of submission to the decrees of our Creator, that necessity should be made a religious law; and if the enforced preservation of this union will make men more responsible for their actions, it should be made a civil law.

SMYRNA, the last day of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

* *Cent millions de têtes* in some editions. *Terres* seems preferable, however, as it is an anticlimax to proceed from all men to a hundred millions.

† This letter was inserted in the edition of 1754 as a foil to that which precedes it.

LETTER LXXVIII

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

I SEND you a copy of a letter, written by a Frenchman who is in Spain: I believe that you will be glad to see it.

I have traveled for six months in Spain and Portugal, where I lived among people despising all nations except the French, whom they honor with their hate. Gravity is the distinctive characteristic of both nations: it has two chief methods of manifestation — spectacles and moustaches.

Spectacles demonstrate clearly that the wearer of them is an accomplished man of science, who has injured his sight by the extent and profundity of his reading; and every nose which they adorn or burden, may pass, without contradiction, for the nose of a savant.*

As regards the moustache, in itself it is respectable, independently of results; although sometimes it has been of great use in the service of the king, and in the maintenance of national honor, as appears from the case of a famous Portuguese general in the Indies,† for, being in want of money, he cut off one of his moustaches, and offered it to the inhabitants of Goa as a pledge for the loan of twenty thousand *pistoles*, and the money was advanced at once; afterward he redeemed his moustache with honor.

One can easily understand how such a grave and phlegmatic people might very well be haughty; and so they are. They usually base their pride upon two matters of sufficient importance. Of those who live in Spain and Portugal, the most uplifted are such as are called old Christians; that is to say, such as are not descended from the converts to Christianity made by the Inquisition in later times. Those who dwell in the Indies are not less elated

* Madame d'Aulnoy has a similar eulogy of spectacles in her *Voyage d'Espagne*.

† Jean de Castro.—(M.)

by the consideration that they have the sublime merit to be, as they say, white-skinned men. There was never in the seraglio of the Grand Seigneur, a sultana so proud of her beauty, as the oldest and ugliest rascal among them is of his complexion of pale olive, when in a Mexican town he sits at his own door with his arms folded. A man of such importance, a creature so perfect, would not work for all the wealth of the world; and could never persuade himself to compromise the honor and the dignity of his color by vile mechanic industry.

For you must know, that, when a man possesses some special merit in Spain, as, for example, when he can add to the qualities which I have already described, that of owning a long sword, or that of having learned from his father to strum a jangling guitar, he works no more: his honor is concerned in the repose of his limbs. He who remains seated ten hours a day obtains exactly double the respect paid to one who rests only five, because nobility is acquired by sitting still.

But, although these invincible foes of work make a great show of philosophic calm, they have nothing of the sort in their hearts; for they are always in love. In dying of languor under their mistress's windows they have not their match in the world; no Spaniard is esteemed gallant who is without a cold.

They are, firstly, bigots — secondly, jealous. They are particularly careful not to expose their wives to the attempts of a soldier riddled with wounds, or of some decrepit magistrate; but they will shut them up with a fervent novice who casts down his eyes, or a robust Franciscan with a bold glance.

They allow their wives to appear with uncovered bosoms; but they would not have any one see their heels, lest hearts should be ensnared by a glimpse of their feet.* They say all the world over that love is cruelly rigorous: in Spain it is especially so. The women cure love, but only with the substitution of other suffering: there often

* The exhibition of the foot, according to Madame D'Aulnoy's *Voyage d'Espagne*, was regarded in Spain as being "*la dernière javeur.*"

remains a long and disagreeable memorial of an extinguished passion.

They have certain little courtesies which in France would appear out of place; for example, an officer never strikes a soldier without asking his permission; and the Inquisition always apologizes to a Jew before burning him.

Spaniards who are not burned seem so fond of the Inquisition, that it would be ill natured to deprive them of it. Indeed, I should like to see another established; not for heretics, but for heresiarchs who ascribe to paltry monkish practices the same efficacy as to the seven sacraments; who worship what they should only respect; and who are so devout that they are hardly Christians.

Wit and common sense are to be found among the Spaniards; but let no one seek for them in their books. Glance at one of their libraries, with romances on the one side, and the schoolmen on the other; and you would say that the arrangement had been made, and the whole collected by some secret foe of human reason.

Their only good book* is one which was written to expose the absurdity of all the others.

They have made immense discoveries in the New World, and yet they do not know throughly their own country: there are upon their rivers an undiscovered bridge or two, and among their mountains races unknown to them.†

They say that the sun rises and sets within their dominions; but it must also be said that in making his journey he encounters only ruined fields and desolate countries.

It would not grieve me, Usbek, to see a letter written to Madrid, by a Spaniard who was traveling in France; I think he would have little difficulty in avenging his nation. What a grand opportunity for an even-tempered, thoughtful man! I imagine he would begin his description of Paris in this way:

There is a house here in which they place mad people: one would at first expect it to be the largest in the city;

* « Don Quixote.»

† The Batuecas.—(M.) This is an invention of some wag whom Montesquieu seems to have taken seriously.

but no, the remedy is much too insignificant for the disease. Without doubt, the French, being held in very slight esteem by their neighbors, shut up some madmen in this house, to create the impression that those who are at large are sane.

There I leave my Spaniard. Farewell, my dear Usbek.

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXIX

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

MOST legislators have been men of inferior capacity whom chance exalted over their fellows, and who took counsel almost exclusively of their own prejudices and whims.

It would seem that they had not even a sense of the greatness and dignity of their work: they amused themselves by framing childish institutions, well devised indeed to please small minds, but discrediting their authors with people of sense.

They flung themselves into useless details; and gave their attention to individual interests: the sign of a narrow genius, which grasps things piecemeal and cannot take a general view.

Some of them have been so affected as to employ another language than the vernacular — a ridiculous thing in a framer of laws; for how can they be obeyed if they are not known?

They have often abolished needlessly those which were already established — that is to say, they have plunged nations into the confusion which always accompanies change.

It is true that, by reason of some extravagance springing rather from the nature than from the mind of man, it is sometimes necessary to change certain laws. But the case is rare; and when it happens it requires the most delicate handling; much solemnity ought to be observed,

and endless precautions taken, in order to lead the people to the natural conclusion that the laws are most sacred, since so many formalities are necessary to their abrogation.

Often they have made them too subtle, following logical instead of natural equity. As a consequence such laws have been found too severe; and a spirit of justice required that they should be set aside; but the cure was as bad as the disease. Whatever the laws may be, obedience to them is necessary; they are to be regarded as the public conscience, with which all private consciences ought to be in conformity.

It must, however, be admitted that some legislators in their attention to one matter have shown sufficient wisdom; and that is, in giving fathers so much power over their children: nothing is a better lightener of the magistrate's labors, nothing tends more to keep the courts of justice empty, in short, nothing is more conducive to tranquillity in a state, for morality always makes better citizens than law.

Of all powers it is that which is least abused; it is the most sacred of all magistracies — the only one which does not spring from a contract, which, indeed, precedes all contracts.

It has been noticed that families are best ruled in those countries where there is a large paternal discretion in matters of reward and punishment; fathers represent the Creator of the universe, who, although able to lead men by His love, does not refrain from binding them to Himself still more closely by motives of hope and fear.

I cannot finish this letter without pointing out the capricious turn of mind of the French. It is said that they have retained many things in the Roman laws which are useless, and even worse than useless; from them, however, they have not derived the paternal power, which they have established as a source of all lawful authority.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of
Saphar, 1715.

LETTER LXXX

THE CHIEF BLACK EUNUCH TO USBEK, AT PARIS

YESTERDAY, some Armenians brought to the seraglio a young Circassian slave whom they wished to sell. I made her enter the secret apartments; I undressed her, I examined her with the eyes of a judge; and the more I examined, the more beauties I found. A virginal shame seemed anxious to hide them from my view: I saw how much it cost her to obey: she blushed upon beholding herself naked, even before me, exempt, as I am, from the passions, which can alarm decency, and entirely delivered from the dominion of the sex — the servant of modesty in the freest actions, looking only with the chastest glance, and capable of inspiring nothing but innocence.

From the moment I judged her worthy of you, I cast down my eyes, and threw over her a scarlet cloak; I placed a ring of gold upon her finger, I prostrated myself at her feet, I adored her as the queen of your heart. I paid the Armenians, and hid her from every eye. Happy Usbek! you possess more beauties than all the palaces of the east enclose. What a pleasure to find on your return whatever Persia has that is most ravishing, and to see in your seraglio all the graces reborn as fast as time and possession work their destruction!

THE SERAGLIO AT FATME, the 1st of the first moon of Rebiab, 1715.

LETTER LXXXI*

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

SINCE I have been in Europe, my dear Rhedi, I have seen many forms of government. It is not here as in Asia, where the rules of policy are everywhere the same. I have often inquired which form of government is most conformable to reason. It seems to me that the most per-

* This letter contains much that Montesquieu developed afterward in his *Esprit des Lois*

fect is that which attains its object with the least friction; so that the government which leads men by following their propensities and inclinations is the most perfect.

If under a mild government the people are as submissive as under a severe one, the former is to be preferred, since it is more rational, severity being a motive foreign to reason.

Remember, my dear Rhedi, that obedience to the laws in a state is not measured by the degree of cruelty in the punishments. In countries where penalties are moderate, they are dreaded as much as in those where they are atrocious and tyrannical.

Whether a government be mild or cruel, there must be degrees of punishment; the gravity of the chastisement must always be in proportion to the gravity of the crime. Our imagination adapts itself to the customs of the country in which we live. Eight days' imprisonment, or a lighter punishment, has a greater effect on the mind of a European brought up in a mild-mannered country, than the loss of an arm has upon an Asiatic. A certain degree of dread attaches to a certain degree of punishment, and each feels it in his own way: a punishment which would not rob a Turk of a single quarter of an hour's sleep, would overwhelm a Frenchman with infamy and despair.

Besides, I do not see that police regulations, justice, and equity, are better observed in Turkey, in Persia, or in the dominions of the Mogul, than in the Republics of Holland, and of Venice, and even in England: it does not appear that fewer crimes are committed there, and that men, intimidated by the greatness of the punishments, are more obedient to the laws.

On the contrary, I note a source of injustice and vexation in the midst of these very states.

I find even the prince, who is himself the law, less master there than anywhere else.

I observe that, at times when severe punishments are inflicted, there are always tumults, which nobody commands, and that, when once authority depending upon violence is set at naught, there remains with no one sufficient power to restore it;

That the certainty of punishment itself strengthens and increases the disorder;

That in these states a petty revolt never takes place; and that an uprising follows the first murmur of sedition without a moment's interval;

That in them great events are not necessarily prepared by great causes: on the contrary, the least accident produces a great revolution, often as unforeseen by those who cause it as by those who suffer from it.

When Osman, Emperor of the Turks, was deposed,* none of those who committed that crime had any intention of doing so: they simply asked, as suppliants, that justice should be done for some wrong: a voice, which no one knew, issued from the crowd by chance; it pronounced the name of Mustapha, and suddenly Mustapha was Emperor.

PARIS, the 2d of the first moon of Rebiab, 1715.

LETTER LXXXII

NARGUM, PERSIAN ENVOY IN MUSCOVY, TO USBEK, AT PARIS

OF ALL the nations of the world, my dear Usbek, none has excelled that of the Tartars in the splendor and magnitude of its conquests. This people is the veritable ruler of the earth: all the others seem to be intended for its service; it is alike the founder and the destroyer of empires; in all times, it has afforded the world signs of its prowess; in every age it has been the scourge of the nations.

Twice the Tartars conquered China, and they still keep it in subjection.

They rule over those vast territories which form the Mogul's empire.

Masters of Persia, they sit upon the throne of Cyrus and Hystaspes. They have subdued Muscovy. Under the

*In 1622.

name of Turks, they have made immense conquests in Europe, Asia, and Africa; and they are the dominant power in these three quarters of the earth.

In more remote times, from them issued forth some of those races who overthrew the Roman empire.*

What are the conquests of Alexander compared with those of Zenghis Khan?

Nothing is wanting to this victorious nation except historians to celebrate its achievements.

What immortal deeds have been buried in oblivion! Of how many empires founded by them is the origin unknown to us! This warlike nation, occupied exclusively with its immediate glory, and certain of conquest in every age, gave no thought to the commemoration of its fame.

Moscow, the 4th of the first moon of
Rebiab, 1715.

LETTER LXXXIII

Rica to Ibben, at Smyrna

Although the French are great talkers, there is nevertheless among them a sort of silent dervishes, called Carthusians. They are said to cut out their tongues on entering the convent; and it is much to be desired that all other dervishes would deprive themselves in the same way of that which their profession renders useless to them.

Talking of these taciturn people reminds me that there are others who excel them in taciturnity, and who have a very remarkable gift. These are they who know how to talk without saying anything; and who carry on a conversation for two whole hours without its being possible to discover their meaning, to rehearse their talk, or to remember a word of what they have said.

This class of people are adored by the women; but not so much as some others who have received from nature the charming gift of smiling at the proper time, that is to

* The Huns.

say, every moment; and who receive with delighted approbation everything the ladies say.

But these people carry wit to its highest pitch; for they can detect subtlety in everything, and perceive a thousand little ingenious touches in the merest commonplaces.

I know others of them who are fortunate enough to be able to introduce into conversation inanimate things, and to make a long story about an embroidered coat, a white peruke, a snuffbox, a cane, a pair of gloves. It is well to begin in the street to make oneself heard by the noise of a coach and a thundering rap at the door: such a prologue paves the way for the rest of the discourse; and when the exordium is good, it secures toleration for all the nonsense which follows, but which, fortunately, arrives too late to be detected.

I assure you that these little gifts, which with us are of no account, are of great advantage here to those who are happy enough to possess them; and that a sensible man has no chance of shining where they are displayed.

PARIS, the 6th of the second moon of Rebiab, 1715.

LETTER LXXXIV

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

IF THERE is a God, my dear Rhedi, He must of necessity be just; because, if He were not so, He would be the worst and most imperfect of all beings.

Justice is a true relation existing between two things; a relation which is always the same, whoever contemplates it, whether it be God, or an angel, or lastly, man himself.

It is true that men do not always perceive these relations: often indeed, when they do perceive them, they turn aside from them, their own interest being always that which they perceive most clearly. Justice cries aloud; but her voice is hardly heard in the tumult of the passions.

Men act unjustly, because it is their interest to do so, and because they prefer their own satisfaction to that of others. They act always to secure some advantage to themselves: no one is a villain gratis; there is always a determining motive, and that motive is always an interested one.

But it is not possible that God should ever commit an injustice. As soon as we grant that He perceives what is right, it becomes necessary that He should follow it: were it not so, as He has no need of anything and is sufficient to Himself, He would be the most wicked of all beings, having no motive for wickedness.

And so, even if there were no God, we ought always to love righteousness; that is to say, we should endeavor to resemble that Being of whom we have so lofty an idea, and who, if He did exist, would of necessity be righteous. Freed as we would be from the yoke of religion, we would still be bound by that of justice.

Here you have, Rhedi, that which makes me believe that justice is eternal and independent of human conditions. And, if it were dependent on them, it would be a truth so terrible that we would be compelled to hide it from ourselves.

We are surrounded by men stronger than ourselves; they can injure us in a thousand different ways, and with impunity three times out of four: what a satisfaction it is for us to know that there is in the heart of all men, an innate principle which fights in our favor and shields us from their attempts!

Without that we would be in continual terror; we would move among men as among lions; and we would never feel sure for an instant of our property, our honor, and our lives.

All these considerations incense me against those doctors who represent God as a being who makes a tyrannical use of His power; who make Him act in a manner which we would ourselves eschew for fear of offending Him; who charge Him with all the imperfections which He punishes in us; and who, in their inconsistency, represent Him, now as a malicious being, and now as a being who hates evil and punishes it.

When a man examines himself, what a satisfation for him it is to find that he has a righteous heart. That delight, austere as it is, should ravish him: he perceives that he is a being as far above those who have it not, as he is above tigers and bears. Yes, Rhedi, were I sure of following always and inviolably that idea of righteousness which I have before my eyes, I would believe myself the best of men.

PARIS, the 1st of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1715

LETTER LXXXV

RICA TO * * *

YESTERDAY I was at the *Hotel des Invalides:* if I were a king I would rather have founded that establishment than have gained three battles. Throughout it the hand of a great monarch appears. I think it is worthier of respect than any other institution in the world.

What a sight to see assembled within the same walls all those who have suffered for their country, who lived only to defend it; and who, high hearted as ever, but lacking their old vigor, complain only of their inability to sacrifice themselves again!

What could be worthier of admiration than the sight of these disabled warriors in their retirement, observing a discipline as strict as if they were constrained by the presence of an enemy, seeking their last satisfaction in that semblance of war, and dividing their thoughts and emotions between the duties of religion and those of their profession.

I would have the names of those who die for their country preserved in the temples, and inscribed in registers which should be the fountain head of glory and honor.

PARIS, the 15th of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

LETTER LXXXVI*

USBEK TO MIRZA, AT ISPAHAN

You know, Mirza, that some ministers of Shah Soliman formed the design of obliging all the Armenians of Persia to quit the kingdom or become Mohammedans, in the belief that our empire will continue polluted, as long as it retains within its bosom these infidels.

If, on that occasion, bigotry had carried the day, there would have been an end to the greatness of Persia.

It is not known how the matter dropped. Neither those who made the proposition, nor those who rejected it, realized the consequences of their acts: chance performed the office of reason and of policy, and saved the empire from jeopardy greater than that which would have been entailed by a defeat in the field, and the loss of two cities.

It is understood that the proscription of the Armenians would have extirpated in a single day all the merchants and almost all the artisans in the kingdom. I am sure that the great Shah Abbas would rather have lost both his arms than have signed such an order; in sending to the Mogul and to the other kings of Ind the most industrious of his subjects, he would have felt that he was giving away the half of his dominions.

The persecution of the Guebres by our zealous Mohammedans, has obliged them to fly in crowds into the Indies, and has deprived Persia of that nation,† which labored so heartily, that it alone, by its toil, was in a fair way to overcome the sterility of our land.

Only one thing remained for bigotry to do, and that was, to destroy industry; with the result that the empire fell of itself, carrying along with it as a necessary consequence, that very religion which they wished to advance.

If unbiased discussion were possible, I am not sure, Mirza, that it would not be a good thing for a state to have several religions.

* This letter is a bold and generous protest against the revocation of the Edict of Nantes.

† The Parsees of Bombay are the descendants of the exiled Guebres.

It is worthy of note that those who profess tolerated creeds usually prove more useful to their country than those who profess the established faith; because, being excluded from all honors, and unable to distinguish themselves except by wealth and its shows, they are led to acquire riches by their labor, and to embrace the most toilsome of occupations.

Besides, as all religions contain some precepts advantageous to society, it is well that they should be zealously observed. Now, could there be a greater incitement to zeal than a multiplicity of religions?

They are rivals who never forgive anything. Jealousy descends to individuals; each one stands upon his guard, afraid of doing anything that may dishonor his party, and of exposing it to the contempt and unpardonable censures of the opposite side.

It has also been remarked that a new sect introduced into a state, was always the surest means of correcting the abuses of the old faith.

It is sophistry to say that it is against the interest of the prince to tolerate many religions in his kingdom: though all the sects in the world were to gather together into one state, it would not be in the least detrimental to it, because there is no creed which does not ordain obedience and preach submission.

I acknowledge that history is full of religious wars: but we must distinguish; it is not the multiplicity of religions which has produced wars; it is the intolerant spirit animating that which believed itself in the ascendant.

This is the spirit of proselytism which the Jews caught from the Egyptians, and which passed from them like an epidemic disease to the Mohammedans and the Christians.

It is, in short, that capricious mood, which in its progress can be compared only to a total eclipse of human reason.

In conclusion, even if there were no inhumanity in distressing the consciences of others, even if there did not result from such a course any of the evil effects which do spring from it in thousands, it would still be foolish to advise it. He who would have me change my religion is

led to that, without doubt, because he would not change his own although force were employed; and yet he finds it strange that I will not do a thing which he himself would not do, perhaps for the empire of the world.

PARIS, the 26th of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

LETTER LXXXVII

RICA TO * * *

IT SEEMS that every member of a family in this country controls his own actions. The authority exercised by a husband over his wife, a father over his children, a master over his slaves, is merely nominal. The law interferes in all differences; and you may be certain that it is always the jealous husband, the sorrowing father, the exasperated master.

The other day I visited the place where justice is administered. Before getting there, I had to run the gauntlet of a crowd of young shopwomen who press you to buy in a most seductive manner. At first, the sight is sufficiently amusing; but it becomes dismal when one enters the great halls, where all the people wear dresses even more solemn than their faces. At last one comes to the sacred place where all the secrets of families are revealed and the most hidden actions brought to light.

Here a modest girl comes to confess the torments of a virginity too long preserved, her struggles and her painful resistance; she is so little proud of her victory that she is always on the verge of accepting defeat; and, in order that her father may no longer be ignorant of her wants, she exposes them to everybody.*

Then some shameless woman appears to publish the injuries she has done her husband, as a reason for a separation.

*According to a law derived from the Romans, in the southern provinces of France daughters could compel their fathers to dower them. (See Letter CXXV.)

With equal modesty another comes to declare that she is tired of wearing the title, without enjoying the rights of a wife; she reveals the hidden mysteries of the marriage night; she wishes to be examined by the most skillful experts, and prays for a decision re-establishing her in all the rights of virginity. Some even dare to challenge their husbands, and demand from them a public contest which the presence of witnesses renders so difficult; a test as disgraceful for the wife who passes it, as for the husband who fails to stand it.

A great number of young women, ravished or seduced, represent the men as being much worse than they are. This court resounds with love; nothing is talked of but enraged fathers, deluded daughters, faithless lovers, afflicted husbands.

According to the law which here holds sway, every infant born in wedlock is considered the husband's; should he have good reasons to believe it not his, the law believes it for him, and relieves him of his scruples, and of the necessity for inquiry.

In this tribunal judgment goes by the majority; but it is said that experience teaches that it would be wiser to follow the decision of the minority; which is natural enough, for there are very few just minds, and plenty of ill-balanced ones, as all the world knows.

PARIS, the 1st of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

LETTER LXXXVIII

RICA TO * * *

MAN, they say, is a social animal. In this matter a Frenchman appears to me to be more of a man than any other; he is the man *par excellence*, for he seems to be intended solely for society.

But I have noticed among them some who are not only sociable, but are themselves society itself. They multiply

themselves at every corner; they people in an instant the four quarters of a city; a hundred such men make more appearance than two thousand citizens; a stranger would think that they might repair the ravages of plague and famine. It is debated in the schools whether a body can be in more than one place at once; they are a proof of that which philosophers call in question.

They are always in a hurry, because they are engaged in the important business of asking every one they meet whither they are going, and whence they come.

It can never be driven out of their heads that it is a part of good breeding to visit the public every day individually, without counting the wholesale visits which they make to places of general resort, which being much too brief a method is reckoned as nothing in the rules of their etiquette.

Their knocking harasses the doors of the houses more than the winds and the storms. If one were to examine the lists of all the porters, their names would be found daily mutilated in a thousand different ways in Swiss writing. They pass their lives in going to funerals, in expressions of condolence, or in marriage congratulations. The king never confers a favor on any of his subjects, without putting these gentry to the expense of a carriage to go and express their delight. At last, tired out, they return home, and rest themselves to be able to resume next day their laborious functions.

The other day one of them died of weariness; and they put this epitaph on his tomb: "Here rests one who never rested before. He assisted at five hundred and thirty funerals. He made merry at the births of two thousand six hundred and eighty children. He wished his friends joy, always varying the phrase, upon pensions amounting to two million six hundred thousand livres; in town he walked nine thousand six hundred furlongs, in the country thirty-six furlongs. His conversation was pleasing; he had a ready-made stock of three hundred and sixty-five stories; he was acquainted also from his youth with a hundred and eighteen apophthegms derived from the ancients, which he employed on special occasions. He died at last in the six-

tieth year of his age. I say no more, stranger; for how could I ever have done telling you all that he did and all that he saw?"

PARIS, the 3d of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

LETTER LXXXIX

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

LIBERTY and equality reign in Paris. Birth, worth, even military fame, however brilliant it may be, fail to distinguish a man from the crowd in which he is lost. Jealousy about rank is unknown here. They say that the chief man in Paris is he who has the best horses in his coach.

A great lord is a man who sees the king, who speaks with ministers, who has ancestors, debts, and pensions. If he can, in addition to this, veil his indolence under an appearance of business, or by a feigned attachment to pleasure, he considers himself the happiest of men.

In Persia, we count none great except those on whom the monarch bestows some share in the government. Here there are people who are great by their birth, but they are not esteemed. The kings act like those skillful craftsmen who in executing their works employ always the simplest tools.

Favor is the great goddess of the French; and the Minister is the high-priest who offers her many victims. Those who surround her are not dressed in white; sometimes those who sacrifice, and sometimes the sacrifices offer themselves up to their idol along with the whole people.

PARIS, the 9th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

LETTER XC*

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

THE desire of glory is in no sense different from the instinct of self-preservation common to all creatures. We seem to enlarge our existence when we are enabled to extend it to the memory of others; it is a new life which we acquire, and becomes as precious to us as that which we receive from heaven.

But men are as unlike in their attachment to life as they are in their sensibility to fame. This noble passion is always deeply engraved in their hearts; but imagination and education modifies it in a thousand ways.

This difference which exists between man and man, is even more marked among nations.

It may be laid down as a maxim that in each state the desire of glory increases and diminishes with the liberty of the subject; glory is never the companion of slavery.

A sensible man said to me the other day, "In most things we are much freer in France than in Persia; and so we love glory more. This happy idea causes a Frenchman to do with pleasure and inclination what your Sultan obtains from his subjects only by keeping constantly before them rewards and punishments.

"Again, among us the prince is most jealous of the honor of the meanest of his subjects. For its support there exist highly esteemed tribunals: it is the sacred treasure of the nation, and the only one which the sovereign does not control, because to do so would defeat his own interests. So that if a subject finds his honor wounded by his prince, whether by some preference, or by the slightest mark of contempt, he leaves at once his court, his employment, his service, and retires to his estate.

"The difference between the French troops and yours is this: among the latter, composed of slaves who are naturally cowards, the fear of death is overcome only by

*This letter contains the germ of "the principles of the three governments," a theory expounded by Montesquieu in the third book of *L'Esprit des Lois*.

the fear of punishment, and this produces in the soul a new kind of terror which stupefies it; the former, on the other hand, go where the blows are thickest, and fear is driven out by a feeling of satisfaction which is superior to it.

"But the sanctuary of honor, of reputation, and of virtue, appears to be established in republics, and in countries where one dare pronounce the word Fatherland. In Rome, in Athens, in Lacedæmonia, honor was the sole reward for the most distinguished services. A crown of oak or of laurel, a statue, a panegyric, was a magnificent recompense for a battle gained or a city taken.

"There a man who had performed a brave deed thought the deed itself sufficient recompense. He could not behold one of his countrymen without a feeling of pleasure at having been his benefactor; he reckoned the number of his services by that of his fellow-citizens. Every man is capable of benefiting another, but he who contributes to the happiness of a whole community resembles the gods.

"Now, must not this noble emulation be quite extinct in the hearts of you Persians, with whom office and honor are derived only from the caprice of the sovereign? Reputation and virtue are looked upon as imaginary, if unaccompanied by the favor of the prince with whom is their sole beginning and end. A man who enjoys public esteem is never sure that the morrow may not bring forth dishonor. To-day he is a general of the army; to-morrow, perhaps, the prince makes him his cook, and leaves him with no hope of any other eulogy than that of having made a good ragout."

PARIS, the 15th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

LETTER XCI

USBEK TO THE SAME, AT SMYRNA

FROM the general passion which the French have for glory, there has been developed in the minds of individuals a certain something which they call "the point of honor"; it is properly the characteristic of every profession, but most marked in military men — theirs, indeed, is

the point of honor *par excellence*. It would be very difficult to make you understand what this is, because the idea is so foreign to us.

Formerly the French, especially the aristocracy, obeyed no other laws than those of this point of honor, and by them they regulated the whole conduct of their lives. These laws were so severe, that without incurring a penalty more cruel than death, one might not, I do not say infringe them, but even evade their slightest punctilio.

When they had occasion to arrange their differences, almost the only method of decision prescribed was the duel, which resolved all difficulties. The worst part of it, however, was that frequently the trial took place between other parties than those immediately concerned.

However little one man might know another, he had to enter into the quarrel, and pay with his person as if he himself had been enraged. He always felt himself honored by such a choice, and a distinction so flattering; and one who would have been unwilling to give four *pistoles* to a man to save him and all his family from the gallows, would make no difficulty in risking his life for him a thousand times.

This method of decision was badly enough conceived; for although a man might be more dexterous and stronger than another, it did not follow that he had more right on his side.

Accordingly the kings prohibited it under very severe penalties, but in vain;* honor which wishes always to reign, revolts, and regards not the laws.

On this account violence prevails among the French; for these laws of honor require a gentleman to avenge himself when he has been insulted; but, on the other hand, justice punishes him unmercifully when he does so. If one follows the laws of honor, one dies upon the scaffold; if one follows those of justice, one is banished forever from the society of men: this, then, is the barbarous alternative, either to die, or to be unworthy to live.

PARIS, the 18th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1715.

* By an edict of Louis XIV. duelists incurred the penalty of death.

LETTER XCII*

Usbek to Rustan, at Ispahan

There has appeared here a person who burlesques the part of Persian ambassador, and insolently makes sport of the two greatest kings in the world. He bears to the French monarch presents which ours would not offer to a king of Irimetta or of Georgia; and by his wretched avarice, he has disgraced the majesty of two empires.

He has brought ridicule upon himself before a people who pretend to be the most polished in Europe; and he has caused it to be said in the west that the king of kings reigns over none but savages.

He has received honors which he would apparently have been glad to decline; and, as if the court of France had had the grandeur of the court of Persia more at heart than he, it forced him to appear with dignity before a people who scorn him.

Say nothing of this at Ispahan: spare the head of an unhappy wretch. I would not have our ministers punish him for their own imprudence, and for the unworthy choice which they made†.

Paris, the last day of the second moon
of Gemmadi, 1715.

* The fourth letter added in 1754.

† The business agent of a Persian provincial minister, in order to defray the expenses of a visit to France, pretended to be an ambassador. He was allowed to play the part for the king's amusement.

LETTER XCIII

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

THE monarch who reigned so long is no more.* He made people talk much about him during his life; everybody is silent at his death. Firm and courageous at the last moment, he seemed to yield only to destiny. Thus died the great Shah Abbas after filling the whole earth with his name.

Do not imagine that this great event has given rise to none but moral reflections. Every one considered his own affairs and how to take advantage of the change. The king, great-grandson of the late monarch, being only five years old, a prince, his uncle, has been declared regent of the kingdom.†

The late king left a will which limits the power of the regent. This clever prince went to the Parliament, and having laid before them all the rights he has by birth, made them break the arrangements of the late monarch, who, wishing to survive himself, seemed to lay claim to govern after his death.

Parliaments are like those ruins which are trampled under foot, but which always recall the idea of some temple famous on account of the ancient religion of the people. They hardly interfere now except in matters of law; and their authority will continue to decrease unless some unforeseen event restores them to life and strength. The common fate has overtaken these great bodies; they have yielded to time which destroys everything, to moral corruption which weakens everything, and to absolute power which overbears everything.

But the regent, anxious to secure the favor of the people, appeared at first to respect this shadow of public freedom; and, as if he had intended to lift from the ground

* Louis XIV. died at Versailles on the 1st of September, 1715, in the seventy-seventh year of his age and the sixty-third of his reign.

† The Duke of Orleans.

the temple and the idol, he was willing that the parliament should be regarded as the prop of the monarchy, and the foundation of all legitimate authority.*

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1715.

LETTER XCIV

USBEK TO HIS BROTHER, SANTON,† AT THE MONASTERY OF CASBIN

I HUMBLE myself in the dust before you, holy Santon; your footprints are to me as the apple of my eye. Your holiness is so great that it seems as if you had the heart of our sacred Prophet: your austerities astonish Heaven itself; the highest angels have watched you from the skies, and have said, "How is he still on earth, since his spirit is with us, and flies about the throne which the clouds bear up?"

How then should I not honor you, I who have learned from our doctors that dervishes, even though infidels, have always a character of holiness which makes them venerable in the eyes of true believers; and that God has chosen for Himself, in every corner of the earth, souls purer than the rest, whom He has separated from the impious world, that their mortifications and their fervent prayers may suspend His wrath, ready to fall upon so many rebel nations?

Christians narrate wonders of their first santons who took refuge by thousands in the dreadful desert of the Thebaid, and whose chiefs were Paul, Antony, and Pacomus. If what is told of them be true, their lives are as full of marvels as those of our most sacred Imans. They sometimes spent ten whole years without seeing a single soul; but they dwelt night and day with demons; they were ceaselessly tormented by these evil spirits, who haunted their beds, and

* By an edict of 16th of September, 1715, ratified in Parliament, the Regent revoked those articles of the decrees of 1667 and 1673 which took from Parliament the right of remonstrance.

† A Mussulman living a conventual life.

sat down with them at meat; there was no refuge from them. If all this is true, reverend Santon, it must be confessed that nobody ever lived in more disagreeable company.

The more sensible Christians regard all these stories as a very natural allegory, which may be of use in making us realize the wretchedness of our condition as human beings. We search in vain for a state of repose in the desert; temptations follow us everywhere: our passions, symbolized by the demons, never quit us altogether; those monsters of the heart, those illusions of the mind, those vain phantoms of error and falsehood, haunt us continually to mislead us, and attack us even in our fasts and our haircloths, that is to say, even in our strongholds.

As for me, reverend Santon, I know that God's messenger has chained Satan, and flung him headlong into the abyss: He has purified the earth, formerly filled with his power, and has made it worthy of the abode of angels and prophets.

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of
Chahban, 1715.

LETTER XCV

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

I HAVE never heard public law discussed, without a preliminary careful inquiry into the origin of society, which seems to me absurd. If men did not unite, if they avoided and fled from each other, it would be necessary to ask the reason, and to inquire why they kept apart; but we are all born with relations; a son comes into the world beside his father, and stays there: that is society, and the cause of society.

International law is better understood in Europe than in Asia; and yet it must be said that the passions of princes, the patience of the people, and the flattery of authors, have corrupted all its principles.

At the present time this law is a science which teaches princes to what length they may carry the violation of

justice without injuring their own interests. What a design, Rhedi, to wish to harden the conscience by reducing iniquity to a system, by giving it rules, by settling its principles, and drawing inferences from it!

The absolute power of our sublime Sultans, which is a law to itself, produces no greater monstrosities than this unworthy art, which would bend justice, inflexible as it is.

One would say, Rhedi, that there are two species of justice wholly different from each other: one which regulates the affairs of individuals, and rules in civil law; another which settles the differences arising between peoples, and tyrannizes over international law; as if international law were not itself a civil law, not indeed of a particular country, but of the world.

I will explain to you in another letter my thoughts on this subject.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Zilhage, 1716.

LETTER XCVI

USBEK TO THE SAME

MAGISTRATES ought to do justice between citizen and citizen; and each nation between itself and other nations. In this second administration of justice, no other maxims should be employed than in the first.

There is rarely need for a third party to act as umpire between nation and nation, because the subjects in dispute are almost always clearly defined and easily decided. The interests of two nations are usually so distinct, that it is only necessary to love justice to discover where it lies; one can hardly be prejudiced in one's own cause.

It is not the same with the differences which happen among individuals. As they live together, their interests are so intermingled and so confused, and also so various, that it is necessary for a third party to clear that which the covetousness of the other two endeavors to obscure.

There are only two kinds of just wars: those which are waged to repel an attacking enemy, or to aid an ally who is attacked.

There would be no justice in making war for the private quarrels of a prince, unless the crime were so grave as to require the death of the prince or of the people who committed it. Thus, a prince ought not to make war because he has been refused an honor which is his due, or because his ambassadors have been treated with scant courtesy, or for any such reason; any more than a private person should kill him who refuses him precedence. The reason of this is, that, since a declaration of war ought to be an act of justice, which always requires the punishment to be proportioned to the crime, it is necessary to make sure that he upon whom war is declared merits death: for to wage war on any one is to pronounce against him the death penalty.

In international law the severest act of justice is war, since it may have the effect of destroying society.

Reprisals are next in severity. No tribunal has been able to avoid the law which proportions the punishment to the crime.

A third act of justice is to deprive a prince of the advantages which he may derive from us, always measuring the penalty by the offense.

The fourth act of justice, which ought to be the most frequent, is to renounce the alliance of a people which gives cause of complaint. This penalty corresponds to that of banishment, which has been established by tribunals to remove criminals from the community. In this way, the prince whose alliance we renounce is cut off from our community, and is no longer one of the members which compose it.

No greater insult can be offered a prince, than to renounce his alliance, and no greater honor can be conferred upon him, than to enter into one with him. Nothing on earth adds more to our honor, and is really more useful, than to see others always careful of our preservation.

But, in order that the alliance may be binding, it must be just: thus an alliance contracted between two nations to

oppress a third is not lawful; and there would be no guilt in breaking it.

It is by no means honorable or dignified in a prince to ally himself with a tyrant. They say that an Egyptian monarch once remonstrated with the king of Samos upon his cruelty and tyranny, and called upon him for amendment; and when he would not amend, he sent to him renouncing his friendship and alliance.

Conquest in itself does not establish a right. As long as a community holds together, it is a pledge of peace, and of the reparation of wrong; if it is destroyed or dispersed, it is a monument of tyranny.

Treaties of peace are so sacred among men, that they seem to be the voice of nature reclaiming her rights. They are quite legitimate, when the conditions are such that both nations can preserve themselves; without that, the nation which would perish, deprived of its natural defense by peace, may seek safety in war.

For nature, although she has fixed different degrees of strength and weakness among men, has often by means of despair made the weak equal to the strong.

This, my dear Rhedi, is what I call international law, the law of peoples, or rather, the law of right.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Zilhage, 1716.

LETTER XCVII

THE CHIEF EUNUCH TO USBEK, AT PARIS

A GREAT number of yellow women from the kingdom of Visapour have arrived here. I have bought one for your brother, the governor of Mazenderan, who sent me a month ago his sublime commands and a hundred *tomans*.

I am skilled in women, especially as they can no longer delude me, and as my heart does not interfere with my understanding.

I have never seen beauty so regular, so perfect: her dazzling eyes lighten up her countenance, and heighten the lustre of a complexion which might eclipse all the charms of Circassia.

The chief eunuch of a merchant of Ispahan bade for her against me: but she withdrew herself disdainfully from his gaze, and seemed to invite mine; as if to tell me that a wretched merchant was unworthy of her, and that she was destined for a more illustrious husband.

I confess to you, that I feel within me a sacred joy, when I think of the charms of this lovely person. I fancy I see her entering the seraglio of your brother: I delight myself with a foresight of the astonishment of all his wives; the haughty grief of some; the silent but heavier sorrow of others; the malicious pleasure of those who have nothing to hope for, and the enraged ambition of those whose hope is not yet dead.

I travel from one end of the kingdom to the other, to change the entire face of a seraglio. What passions shall I excite! What terrors and punishments am I preparing!

Nevertheless, in spite of this internal disturbance, outward tranquillity will be undisturbed: great revolutions will be hidden in the depths of the heart; grief will be repressed and joy will be restrained; obedience will be no less prompt, nor discipline less inflexible: amiability, which is always exacted, will spring from the depths of despair itself.

We have noticed that the more women we have under our care, the less trouble they give us. A greater necessity to be agreeable, less opportunity for conspiring, more examples of submission; all this increases their fetters. They are constantly watchful of the doings of their neighbors: they seem to unite themselves with us to render themselves more dependent: they take part in our labor, and open our eyes when they are closed. What do I say? They continually incite their master against their rivals, unaware how close at hand their own punishment may be.

But all this, magnificent lord, all this is nothing without the master's presence. What can we do with this vain show of an authority which can never be entirely imparted? We represent, and that but feebly, only the half

of yourself: we can only show them a hateful severity; whereas you can temper fear with hope, and are more absolute when you caress than when you threaten.

Return then, magnificent lord, return to this abode, and impress throughout it your authority. Come and alleviate despairing passions: come and remove every pretext to go astray: come to pacify complaining love, and to make duty itself pleasant: come, lastly, to relieve your faithful eunuchs of a burden which grows heavier every day.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 8th of the moon of Zilhage, 1716.

LETTER XCVIII

USBEK TO HASSIM, DERVISH OF THE MOUNTAIN OF JARON

OH, WISE dervish! whose inquisitive mind excels in learning, give ear to what I am about to tell you.

There are philosophers here, who, it is true, have not attained to the perfection of oriental wisdom: they have not been carried up to the throne of light: neither have they heard the unutterable words, nor felt the awful approach of divine frenzy; but left to themselves, and deprived of these sacred miracles, they follow silently the footprints of human reason.

You would not believe how far this guide has led them. They have cleared up chaos, and have explained, by a simple mechanism, the order of divine architecture. The creator of nature gave motion to matter: nothing more was required to produce the prodigious variety of effects in the universe.

Ordinary lawgivers offer us laws to regulate society — laws, subject to change like the minds of those who make them, and of the people who obey them: those talk only of general, immutable, and eternal laws, which, without exception, are obeyed with order, regularity, and absolute exactness in the immensity of space.

And what think you, most holy man, these laws may be? You imagine, perhaps, that entering into the counsels of

the Eternal, you are about to be astonished by sublime mysteries: you give up in advance all idea of understanding, and propose only to admire.

But you will soon change your opinion: they do not dazzle us by a pretended profundity: their simplicity has made them long misunderstood; and it is only after much reflection, that people have seen how fruitful they are, and how far they reach.

The first is, that every body tends to describe a straight line, unless it meets with some obstacle which diverts its course; and the second, which is but a consequence of the first, is, that everybody which moves round a centre, tends to fly from it; because the further off it is, the nearer the course it describes approaches a straight line.

Here, sublime dervish, you have the key of nature: here are the fruitful principles, from which consequences are drawn which pass beyond our ken.

The knowledge of five or six truths has filled their philosophy with wonders, and has enabled them to perform almost as many prodigies and marvels as those which are told of our holy prophets.

For, in short, I am persuaded that we have no doctor who would not have been sorely troubled, if he had been told to weigh in a balance all the air which surrounds the earth, or to measure all the water which falls each year upon its surface; and who would not have thought many times before telling how many leagues sound travels in an hour; what time a ray of light occupies in journeying from the sun to us; how many fathoms it is from here to Saturn; or according to what curve a ship should be cut to make it the best sailer possible.

Perhaps if some holy man had adorned the works of these philosophers with lofty and sublime expressions; if he had introduced bold figures and mysterious allegories, he might have made a great work, which would have ranked next to the Koran.

However, if I must tell you what I think, I never cared greatly for the figurative style. In our Koran there are a great number of trifles which always appear to me as such, although they receive distinction from the strength and

liveliness of the style. At first these inspired books seemed to be only divine ideas stated in the language of mankind: on the contrary, however, one often finds in the Koran the language of God and the ideas of men; as if by some astonishing caprice, God had dictated the words, and man had supplied the thought.

You will say, perhaps, that I speak too freely that which is held most sacred among us; regard it as the outcome of the independence which distinguishes this country. No; thanks to Heaven, my mind has not corrupted my heart, and while I live Hali shall be my prophet.

PARIS, the 15th of the moon of
Chahban, 1716.

LETTER XCIX

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

THERE is no country in the world where fortune is more inconstant than in this. Every ten years a revolution happens which plunges the wealthy into misery, and raises the poor on rapid wings to the summit of affluence. The one is astonished at his poverty; the other at his riches. The new-made rich man admires the wisdom of providence; the pauper, the mischance of a blind fate.

Those who gather the taxes swim in wealth; and there are few Tantaluses among them. It is the extremity of misery, however, that drives them into this employment. They are despised like dirt while they are poor; when they become rich, they are sufficiently respected, as they neglect nothing to acquire esteem.

They are at present in a dreadful situation. They are about to establish a chamber of justice, so called because it is to strip them of all their wealth. They can neither transfer, nor hide their effects; for they are compelled to render an exact account, upon pain of death; thus they have to pass through a very narrow strait, I mean between their lives and their money. To fill up the cup of their misfortune, there is a minister, remarkable for his wit, who

honors them with his jokes, and makes fun of all the deliberations of the council. It is not every day that ministers are to be found disposed to make the people laugh; and they ought to be much beholden to him for having undertaken to do so.

The body of footmen is more respectable in France than anywhere else; it is a nursery of great lords; it fills up the vacancies in other ranks. The members of it take the places of the unfortunate great, of ruined magistrates, of gentlemen killed in the fury of war; and when they are unable to find supply among themselves, they re-establish all the great families by means of their daughters, which are like a kind of manure enriching barren and mountainous soil.

I find, Ibben, the ways of providence in the distribution of wealth admirable. If riches had been granted only to good people, they would not have been sufficiently distinguished from virtue, and their insignificance would not have been fully recognized. But when we consider who are the people most loaded with them, by dint of despising the rich, we come to despise riches.

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of Maharram, 1717.

LETTER C

RICA TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

THE caprices of fashion among the French are amazing. They have forgotten how they were dressed this summer; they know as little how they will be dressed in the winter; but, above all, you would never believe how much it costs a husband to dress his wife in the fashion. Where is the use of my giving you a full description of their dress and ornaments? A new fashion would destroy all my labor as it does that of the dressmakers; and before you could receive my letter all would be changed.

A woman who leaves Paris to spend six months in the country, returns from it as out of date as if she had been

forgotten for thirty years. The son does not know the portrait of his mother, so strange does the dress in which she was painted appear to him ; he imagines that it represents some American, or that the painter wished to express a fancy of his own.

Sometimes the headdresses grow gradually to a great height, until a revolution brings them down suddenly. They grew so lofty once that a woman's face seemed to be in the centre of her anatomy ; at another time it was the feet that occupied that place, the heels forming a pedestal which raised them into the air. Would you believe it? Architects have often been obliged to raise, to lower, or to widen their doors, according to the change in the women's dresses; and the rules of their art have had to yield to such caprices. Sometimes one sees upon a face an immense quantity of patches, which are all gone next day. Formerly women had figures and teeth ; now these are of no consequence. In this changeable nation, whatever ill-natured wags may say, the daughters are differently made from the mothers.

As with their fashions, so is it with their customs and style of living : French manners change with the age of the king. The monarch could even succeed in making his people solemn if he chose to try. He impresses his own characteristics upon the court, the court upon the city, and the city on the provinces. The soul of the sovereign is a mold in which all the others are formed.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Saphar, 1717.

LETTER CI

RICA TO THE SAME

I TOLD you the other day of the extraordinary inconstancy of the French in their fashions. Yet it is inconceivable to what an extent they are infatuated about them ; everything is swayed by them : fashion is the rule by which they judge what is done in other nations ; what-

ever is foreign always seems to them ridiculous. I confess that I hardly know how to reconcile this bigoted devotion to their customs with the inconstancy which changes them every day.

When I say that they despise everything foreign, I mean only trifles; for in important matters they are so diffident as almost to degrade themselves. They confess with the greatest good will that the other nations are wiser, if you grant that they are better dressed; they are willing to submit themselves to the laws of a rival nation, provided French wig makers may decide, like legislators, the form of foreign perukes. Nothing seems to them more glorious than to see the taste of their cooks reigning from north to south, and the decrees of their tire-women obeyed in every *boudoir* of Europe.

With these noble advantages, what does it matter to them that their wisdom comes from others, and that they have derived from their neighbors everything relating to political and civil government?

Who would imagine that the most ancient and powerful kingdom in Europe has been governed for ten centuries by laws which were not made for it? If the French had been conquered, it would not be difficult to understand, but they are the conquerors.

They have abandoned the old laws made by their first kings in the general assemblies of the nations; and, singularly enough, the Roman laws which have been substituted, were partly made and partly digested by emperors contemporary with their own legislators.

And, to make the borrowing complete, and in order that all their wisdom might come from others, they have adopted all the constitutions of the Popes, and have made them a new part of their law: a new kind of slavery.

Latterly, it is true, they have drawn up some provincial statutes and by-laws; but they are nearly all taken from the Roman law.

So great is the multitude of adopted, and, so to speak, naturalized laws, that it oppresses alike justice and judges. But these volumes of law are nothing in comparison with the appalling army of glossers, commentators, and compilers,

a tribe as feeble by the inferiority of their minds, as they are strong by their immense numbers.

This is not all: these foreign laws have introduced formalities so excessive as to be a disgrace to human reason. It would be very difficult to decide whether pedantry has been more hurtful in jurisprudence or in medicine; whether it has played more mischief under the cloak of a lawyer, or the broad brim of a physician; and whether the one has ruined more people than the other has killed.

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of Saphar, 1717.

LETTER CII

USBEK TO * * *

THEY are always talking here of the Constitution.* The other day I went into a certain house, where the first person I saw was a fat man with a red face, who said in a loud voice, "I have issued my charge; I shall make no further reply to anything you may say; but read my charge, and you will see that I have solved all your doubts. I sweated over it," he continued, pressing his brow with his hand; "I had need of all my learning, and was obliged to read many Latin authors." "I believe it," said a man who was standing by, "for it is an admirable work; and I altogether defy that Jesuit who comes so often to see you to write a better. "Read it, then," replied he, "and you will know more of these matters in a quarter of an hour than if I had talked to you about them for a whole day." In this way he avoided engaging in conversation and the exposure of his own incompetence. But finding himself pressed, he was obliged to leave his entrenchment, and began to utter a mass of theological nonsense, supported by a dervish who received his remarks with the utmost respect. When two men who were present

* The Bull *Unigenitus*, directed against the Jansenists. (See Letter XXIV.)

denied any of his principles, he said at once, "It is true; we have so decided it, and we are infallible judges." "But how," said I, "are you infallible judges?" "Do you not see," he replied, "that the Holy Ghost enlightens us?" "That is fortunate," I rejoined, "for from the style of your talk to-day, I perceive how much you need to be enlightened."

PARIS, the 18th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1717.

LETTER CIII

USBEK TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

THE most powerful states in Europe are those of the Emperor, and of the kings of France, Spain, and England. Italy, and a large part of Germany, are divided into a great number of small states, the princes of which are, properly speaking, martyrs to sovereignty. Our glorious sultans have more wives than some of these princes have subjects. Those of Italy, being less united, are most to be pitied; their states are as open as caravansaries, in which they are forced to accommodate the first comer: they therefore require to join themselves to great princes, and share their fears with them rather than their friendship. Most European governments are monarchical, or rather are called so; for I do not know whether there ever was a government truly monarchical; at least they cannot have continued very long in their original purity. It is a state in which might is right, and which degenerates always into a despotism or a republic. Authority can never be equally divided between the people and the prince; it is too difficult to maintain an equilibrium; power must diminish on one side while it increases on the other; but the advantage is usually with the prince, as he commands the army.

Accordingly, the power of the kings of Spain is very great; one may say that they have as much as they desire, but they do not exercise it to such a degree as our sultans:

firstly, because they are not willing to offend the manners and the religion of the people; secondly, because it is not in their own interests to carry things with so high a hand.

Nothing brings our princes nearer the condition of their subjects than the immense power which they wield over them; nothing makes them more subject to reverses and caprices of fortune.

The custom which princes have of putting to death all those who displease them upon the slightest pretense, destroys the proportion which ought to exist between crime and punishment; and that proportion, scrupulously preserved by the Christian princes, gives them an immeasurable advantage over our sultans.

A Persian who, imprudently or by mischance, draws upon himself the displeasure of his prince, is sure to die; the slightest fault or the slightest caprice reduces him to that necessity. But if he had attempted the life of his sovereign if he had intended to betray his towns to the enemy, he would have atoned as before by losing his life; he runs no greater risk in the latter case than in the former.

And so, under the least disgrace, death being certain and nothing worse to fear, he naturally applies himself to disturb the state, and to conspire against the sovereign — his only remaining resource.

It is not the same with the grandees of Europe, who, when in disgrace, lose only the royal favor and good will. They withdraw from the court and give themselves up to enjoy a quiet life and the privileges of their birth; as they are seldom done to death except for high treason, they dread to commit that crime, remembering what they may lose, and how little they are likely to gain; this is why one sees here few rebellions, and few princes who die a violent death.

If, with that unlimited power which our princes have, they did not take every precaution for the safety of their lives, they would not live a single day; and if they had not in their pay innumerable troops to coerce their other subjects, their rule would not last for a month.

It is only some four or five centuries since a king of France,* contrary to the custom of the times, levied guards to secure himself from the assassins which a petty prince of Asia † had sent to kill him; till that time kings had lived peacefully among their subjects, like fathers with their children.

Although the kings of France are quite unable, of their own motion, to take away the life of one of their subjects like our sultans, yet they carry about with them always mercy for all criminals; that he should have been fortunate enough to behold the august countenance of his prince, is sufficient to make a man once more worthy to live. These monarchs are like the sun, which sheds everywhere heat and life.

PARIS, the 8th of the second moon of Rebiab, 1717.

LETTER CIV

USBEK TO THE SAME

HERE you have as nearly as I can, continuing the subject of my last letter, what a sensible European said to me recently.

"The worst course which the princes of Asia could have adopted, is to shut themselves up as they do. They desire to render themselves more venerable; but it is royalty which they cause to be respected, and not the king; they attach the minds of their subjects to a certain throne, and not to a certain person.

"When the power that governs is invisible it is always the same to the people. Although ten kings, known only by name, should have their throats cut one after the other, the public are sensible of no difference: it is as if they were governed by a succession of spirits.

"If the detestable murderer of our great king, Henry IV., had assassinated one of the kings of Ind, master of

* Philip-Augustus.

† He who was called the "old man of the mountains."

the royal seal, and of an immense treasure which would seem to have been amassed for him, he would peacefully have seized the reigns of power, without its entering into any one's mind to inquire after the king, his relations, and children.

"We are astonished that there is hardly ever any change in the government of eastern princes: how could it be otherwise, when we bear in mind their terrible tyranny?

"Changes cannot be effected except by the prince or by the people: but there the princes take care to alter nothing, because, possessed of such absolute power, they have all they can have: were they to make any change it could only be to their own injury.

"As to the subjects, should one of them form any design, he cannot execute it upon the state; it would be necessary to overturn at one blow a most formidable and unchanging power; for this he lacks time and means: but he has only to attack the source of that power, for which all he needs is an arm and a moment of time.

"The murderer mounts the throne, as the monarch leaves it and falls expiring at his feet.

"In Europe a malcontent thinks of carrying on a secret correspondence, of going over to the enemy, of seizing some town, or of exciting foolish complaints among the people. A malcontent in Asia goes straight to the prince, amazes, strikes, overthrows: he obliterates all memory of his existence: in one moment slave and master, usurper and lawful sovereign.

"Unfortunate is the king who has only one head! In guarding it with all his power he only shows the first upstart where to strike."

PARIS, the 17th of the second moon of Rebiab, 1717.

LETTER CV

USBEK TO THE SAME

ALL the nations of Europe are not equally submissive to their princes: the impatient humor of the English, for instance, leaves their king hardly any time to make his authority felt. Submission and obedience are virtues upon which they flatter themselves but little. On this subject they say most amazing things. According to them there is only one tie which can bind men, and that is gratitude: husband and wife, father and son, are only bound to each other by their mutual affection, or by the services they do each other: and these various motives of obligation are the origin of all kingdoms and communities.

But if a prince, instead of making the lives of his subjects happy, attempts to oppress and ruin them, the basis of obedience is destroyed; nothing binds them, nothing attaches them to him; and they return to their natural liberty. They maintain that all unlimited power must be unlawful, because it cannot have had a lawful origin. For, we cannot, say they, give to another more power over us than we ourselves have: now, we have not unlimited power over ourselves; for example, we have no right to take our own lives: no one upon earth then, they conclude, has such a power.

The crime of high treason is nothing else, according to them, than the crime of the weaker against the stronger, simply disobedience, no matter what form the disobedience may take. Thus the people of England, finding themselves stronger than one of their kings,* pronounced it high treason in a prince to make war upon his subjects. They have therefore good reason to say that the precept of their Koran, † which requires submission to the powers that be, is not a very difficult one to follow, seeing that it is impossible not to do so, inasmuch as they are not enjoined to submit to the most virtuous, but to the strongest.

* Charles I. † The New Testament.

The English tell how one of their kings, having conquered and taken prisoner a prince who disputed his right to the crown, began to reproach him with his faithlessness and treachery, when the unfortunate prince replied, "It was decided only a moment ago which of us two is the traitor."

A usurper declares all those rebels who have not, like him, oppressed their country; and believing that where there are no judges there are no laws, he causes the caprices of chance and fortune to be reverenced like the decrees of Heaven.

PARIS, the 20th of the second moon of Rebiab, 1717.

LETTER CVI

RHEDI TO USBEK, at PARIS

IN ONE of your letters you said much to me about the arts and sciences cultivated in the west. You are inclined to regard me as a barbarian; but I am not certain that the profit derived from them recompenses men for the bad use to which they are put every day. I have heard it said that the invention of bombs alone has deprived all the nations of Europe of freedom. The princes being no longer able to trust the guardianship of towns to the citizens, who would surrender them at the first bomb, have made it a pretext for keeping large bodies of regular troops, whom they have since used to oppress their subjects.

You know that since the invention of gunpowder no place is impregnable; that is to say, Usbek, that there is no longer upon the earth a refuge from injustice and violence.

I dread always lest they should at last discover some secret which will furnish them with a briefer method of destroying men, by killing them off wholesale in tribes and nations.

You have read the historians: think of them seriously; almost all monarchies have been founded upon ignorance of the arts, and have been destroyed by their over-cultiva-

tion. The ancient empire of Persia may furnish us with an example at our own doors.

I have not been long in Europe; yet I have heard sensible people talk of the ravages of alchemy. It seems to be a fourth plague, which ruins men, destroying them one by one, but continually; while war, pestilence, and famine destroy them in the mass, but at intervals.

Of what advantage has the invention of the mariner's compass been to us, and the discovery of so many nations who have given us more diseases than wealth? Gold and silver have been established by a general agreement as the means of purchasing all goods, and as a pledge of their value, because these metals are rare, and useless for any other purpose: of what consequence was it to us, then, that they should become more common, and that to mark the value of any commodity, we should have two or three signs in place of one? This was only more inconvenient.

But, on the other hand, this invention has been hurtful to the countries of the New World. Entire nations have been destroyed; and those who have escaped death have been reduced to a slavery so dreadful, that the description of it makes even a Mussulman shudder.

Happy in their ignorance are the children of Mohammed! Their amiable simplicity, so dear to our holy Prophet, perpetually recalls to me the artlessness of the olden time, and the peace which reigned in the hearts of our first fathers.

VENICE, the 5th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1717.

LETTER CVII

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

You do not think as you say, or else your actions are better than your thoughts. You left your country to acquire knowledge, and you despise all knowledge; you go to form yourself in a country where the fine arts are cultivated, and you regard them as hurtful. May I

say it, Rhedi? — I am more of your mind than you are yourself.

Have you properly considered the barbarous and unhappy condition which the loss of the arts* would entail upon us? There is no need to imagine it; it can be seen. There are still people upon the earth, among whom a tolerably trained monkey could live with credit; he would be almost on a level with the other inhabitants; and they would not think him a curious creature, or an odd character; he would pass as well as another, and would even be distinguished by his elegance.

You say that the founders of empires have almost all been ignorant of the arts. I do not deny that barbarians have poured over the earth like impetuous torrents, and covered with their wild armies the most civilized kingdoms; but, observe this, they learned the arts, or made the conquered races exercise them; without that, their power would have passed away like the noise of a thunderstorm.

You fear, you say, that some more dreadful method of destruction than that at present in use will be invented. No; if a fatal invention were to be brought out, it would soon be prohibited by the law of nations, and suppressed by unanimous consent. It is not in the interest of princes to make conquests by such means; they wish to gain subjects, not soil.

You complain of the invention of gunpowder and bombs; you think it strange that no place should now be impregnable — that is to say, you think it strange that wars should be brought to an end sooner to-day than they were formerly.

You must have remarked in reading history, that since the invention of gunpowder, battles are much less bloody than they used to be, because the armies are seldom intermingled.

Why, because an art is found injurious in some particular instance, should it be rejected entirely? Do you think, Rhedi, that the religion which our holy Prophet brought

* Used by Montesquieu as inclusive of both the industrial and the fine arts.

from Heaven is harmful, because one day it will serve to confound the unbelieving Christians?

You think that the arts enervate people, and are therefore the cause of the fall of empires. You speak of the fall of that of the ancient Persians, which was the result of their effeminacy; but this example is not by any means decisive, since the Greeks, who defeated them so often, and conquered them, were much more assiduous than they in the cultivation of the arts.

When they talk of the arts making men effeminate, they are not referring at all to the people that work at them, since they know nothing of indolence, which of all vices weakens courage the most.

It is, then, those who enjoy the fruits of labor who are intended. But, as in a civilized country those who enjoy the products of one art are obliged to cultivate another on pain of being reduced to a shameful poverty, it follows that indolence and effeminacy are incompatible with the arts.

Paris is perhaps the most luxurious city in the world; in it pleasure is carried to the highest pitch of refinement; yet life there is perhaps harder than in any other city. That one man may live delicately, a hundred must labor without intermission. It comes into a lady's head that she ought to appear at an assembly in a certain dress; from that moment fifty workmen must go without sleep, and without time to eat or drink; she commands, and is obeyed as promptly as our monarch would be, because interest is the greatest monarch in the world.

This ardor for work, this passion for wealth, runs through every rank, from the workmen up to the highest in the land. Nobody likes to be poorer than he who is his immediate inferior. You may see at Paris a man with sufficient to live on till the end of the world, laboring constantly, and running the risk of shortening his days, to scrape together, as he says, a livelihood.

The same spirit prevails throughout the nation; nothing is to be seen but toil and industry. Where, then, is this effeminate people of which you talk so much?

I will suppose a kingdom, Rhedi, in which only those arts absolutely necessary for the cultivation of the land are

allowed, which amount after all to a goodly number; and that all those which minister only to pleasure or to fancy are banished; I maintain that that state would be one of the most miserable in the whole world.

Though the inhabitants might have sufficient hardihood to do without so many things which their needs require, the people would decay daily; and the state would become so feeble, that there would be no force too petty to overcome it.

It would be easy to discuss this in detail, and to show you that the incomes of the subjects would cease almost entirely, and consequently that of the prince. There would hardly be any exchange of goods among the citizens, and there would be an end of that circulation of wealth, and of that increase of revenue, which arises from the dependence of the arts upon each other; each person would live upon his land, and would take from it only just enough to keep him from dying of hunger. But as this is sometimes not a twentieth part of the revenue of a state, the number of the inhabitants would diminish in proportion, until there remained of them also only a twentieth.

Consider attentively how much the revenue of industry amounts to. Land produces annually to its owner only a twentieth part of its value; but with one pistole-worth of color a painter will make a picture which will be worth fifty. The like may be said of goldsmiths, of workers in wool and silk, and of all kinds of artisans.

From all this, one may conclude, Rhedi, that if a prince is to be powerful, it is necessary that his subjects should live in luxury; he ought to labor to procure all sorts of superfluities with as much care as the necessities of life.

PARIS, the 14th of the moon of
Chalval, 1717.

LETTER CVIII

Rica to Ibben, at Smyrna

I have seen the young king.* His life is very precious to his people: it is not less so to the whole of Europe. But kings are like gods; and as long as they live must be considered immortal. His face is majestic but pleasing; a good education in conjunction with a happy disposition, already give promise of a great prince.

They say that one can never tell the character of the kings of the west until they have passed through the two great ordeals of selecting their mistress and their confessor. We shall shortly see the one and the other laboring to possess the mind of this one: and on that account he will become the subject of great contentions. For under a young prince these two powers are always rivals; but they are reconciled and leagued together under an old one. Under a young prince a dervish has a very difficult part to play; the king's strength is his weakness; but the other triumphs alike in both his strength and his weakness.

When I arrived in France, I found the late king altogether governed by women, although at his age I believe him to have been the one monarch in the world who had least need of them. I heard a woman say one day, "Something must be done for that young colonel; I know his worth; I will speak to the minister for him." Another said, "It is surprising that that young abbé should have been overlooked; he must be made a bishop; he is well-born, and I can answer for his morals." You must not however suppose that the women who talked in this way were favorites of the prince: they had perhaps not spoken twice to him all their lives; which is nevertheless a very easy thing to do with European princes. But there is not a single person employed in any way at the court, in Paris,

*Louis XV., born 15th of February, 1710.

or in the provinces, who is not acquainted with some woman through whose hands pass all the favors and sometimes all the wrongs which he may wish done. These women are all in each other's secrets, and form a sort of republic, the members of which are always busy aiding and serving each other; it is like a state within a state; and any one at court, in Paris, or in the provinces, who sees the activity of the ministers, the magistrates, and the prelates, if he does not know the women who govern them, is like a man who sees a machine at work, but who is ignorant of the springs that move it.

Do you think, Ibben, that a woman consents to be the mistress of a minister for love of him? What an idea! It is in order that she may lay before him every morning five or six petitions; and the goodness of these women appears in the zeal with which they serve an infinite number of unfortunate people, who obtain for them an income of a hundred thousand livres.

They complain in Persia that the kingdom is governed by two or three women: it is much worse in France, where the women govern generally, and not only usurp all authority wholesale, but retail it among themselves.

PARIS, the last day of the moon of
Chalval, 1717.

LETTER CIX

USBEK TO * * *

THERE is a species of book unknown to us in Persia, and which seems to me to be very fashionable here: these are the journals.* Idleness feels flattered in reading them; it is so delightful to be able to run through thirty volumes in a quarter of an hour.

In most of these books, the author has not made the ordinary compliments, before the reader is in despair: he

* The French journals of the eighteenth century contained nothing but notices of new books.

is made to enter half dead upon a subject drowned in the midst of a sea of words. This one would immortalize himself in duodecimo, that one in quarto ; another with loftier propensities aims at a folio ; he must therefore extend his subject in proportion ; which he does without mercy, counting as nothing the trouble of the poor reader, who worries himself to death reducing what the author took such pains to amplify.

I cannot see . . . what merit there is in making such works ; I could do it myself quite well, if I chose to ruin my health and a publisher.

The chief fault of these journalists is, that they talk only of new books ; as if truth were always new. It seems to me that until a man has read all the old books, he has no right to prefer the new ones.

But when they lay it down as a law that they must never speak except of works hot from the press, they impose upon themselves another — which is, to be very tedious. They are very chary of criticising the works from which they make extracts, whatever their reason may be : and, indeed, what man is bold enough to wish to make ten or twelve enemies every month?

Most authors are like poets, who will take a caning without a murmur ; but who, indifferent as to their shoulders, are so very jealous of their works, that they cannot endure the least criticism. It is necessary then to be very careful not to attack them in so sensitive a spot ; and the journalists know it well. They therefore do just the contrary : they begin by praising the matter treated of ; from this their first ineptitude they pass to the praise of the author, forced praise, for they have to do with people who are always on the alert, ever ready to see justice done themselves, and to attack with trenchant pen a foolhardy journalist.

PARIS, the 5th of the moon of
Zilcade, 1718.

LETTER CX

RICA TO * * *

THE University of Paris is the first-born daughter of the kings of France, and very aged; for she is more than nine hundred years old; and so she dotes now and again.

I have been told that she had at one time a great dispute with some doctors about the letter Q,* which they wanted to pronounce like K. The quarrel grew so warm that some of the disputants were despoiled of their substance. It became necessary for parliament to put an end to it; which it did by permitting, in a solemn decree, all the subjects of the king of France to pronounce that letter according to their fancy. It was very amusing to see the two most venerable institutions in Europe occupied in deciding the fate of a letter of the alphabet!

It seems, my dear . . . that the ablest men grow stupid when they get together; and that, where you have the greatest number of wise men, there you have the least wisdom. Great bodies always pay so much attention to minor details, and idle customs, that essentials are never considered till afterward. I have heard it said that a king of Arragon,† having assembled the states of Arragon and Catalonia, the first sessions were spent in deciding in what language the deliberations should be held: the dispute was lively, and the states would have broken up a thousand times, if they had not hit upon the expedient of putting the question in the Catalonian tongue, and the reply in that of Arragon.

PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Zilhage, 1718.

*He means the dispute with Ramus.—(M.) Dr. Ramus (Pierre de la Ramée), Professor in the College Royal, wished to say *kiskis* and *kankam* instead of *quisquis* and *quanquam*. He was assassinated on the third day of the massacre of St. Bartholomew.

† Philip III., King of Spain.

LETTER CXI

RICA TO * * *

THE *rôle* of a fine lady is much more serious than one would imagine. Nothing could be more important than what takes place in the morning at her toilet among her servants: a general of an army devotes no more attention to the disposition of his right or of his reserve corps, than she gives to placing a patch which may fail, but from which she hopes or foresees success.

What mental worry, what care, to be continually reconciling the interests of two rivals; to appear neutral to both, while she is giving herself to each of them; and to act the part of peacemaker in all the strife she makes between them!

How she is occupied with the success and the renewal of pleasure parties, and in the prevention of all accidents that might interrupt them!

And with it all, the greatest trouble is taken, not to amuse oneself, but to appear to be amused. Bore them as much as you like, they will forgive you, so long as it is understood that they have been very merry.

Some days ago I was at a supper given by some ladies in the country. All the way they kept saying, "We must at least enjoy ourselves immensely."

We happened to be very ill paired, and were consequently very dull. "I must confess," said one of these ladies, "that we are very merry; there is not in Paris today a party so gay as ours." As the wearisomeness of it all began to overpower me, a lady rallied me, and said, "Well, are we not getting on charmingly?" "Yes," I replied, yawning; "I believe I shall split my sides laughing." Melancholy, however, invaded all our thoughts; and as for me, I felt myself fall from yawn to yawn into a lethargic sleep, which put an end to all my mirth.

PARIS, the 11th of the moon of
Maharram, 1718.

LETTER CXII*

USBEK TO * * *

THE reign of the late king was so long that the end of it had caused the beginning to be forgotten. Now it is the fashion to occupy oneself with the events that happened in his minority; and nothing is read but the memoirs of these times.

Here is the speech which one of the generals of the city of Paris delivered at a council of war: I confess I do not see anything very remarkable in it:

"Gentlemen, although our troops have been repulsed with loss, I think it will be easy to retrieve this misfortune. I have six couplets all ready to publish, which I am certain will restore all matters to a proper balance. I have chosen some admirably clear voices, which issuing from the cavity of certain very powerful chests, will move the people wonderfully. They are set to an air which has hitherto produced quite a peculiar effect.

"If this is not enough, we can bring out a print representing Mazarin hanged.

"Fortunately for us, he does not speak French well; and he mutilates it in such a way, that his importance cannot fail to decline. We take care to make the people observe with what a ridiculous accent he speaks it.† Some days ago we made such sport of an absurd mistake in grammar, that it is now a joke in all the streets.

"I hope that before eight days have passed, the people will make the name of Mazarin a generic term to express all the beasts of burden and beasts of draught.

"Since our defeat, our songs about original sin have annoyed him so much, that, to save his party from being

* The fifth of the letters added in 1754.

† Cardinal Mazarin, having occasion to use the phrase, *l'arrêt d'union*, before the parliamentary deputies, pronounced it, *l'arrêt d'*OGNON, a slip of which the people made great fun.— (M.)

reduced to half, he has been forced to send away all his pages.

"Rouse yourselves then; take courage, and be sure that with our hisses we shall send him packing over the mountains."

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXIII

RHEDI TO USBEK, AT PARIS

DURING my stay in Europe, I read the ancient and modern historians: I compare all times; I please myself with watching them pass before me as it were; above all, my thoughts are fixed upon those great changes which have made the ages so different from each other, and the earth so unlike itself.

You have perhaps given some attention to a matter which continually occasions my surprise. How is the world so thinly peopled in comparison with what it was once?* How has nature lost the wonderful fruitfulness of the first ages? Can it be that she is already old and fallen into decline?

I dwelt for more than a year in Italy, where I saw nothing but the ruins of that ancient Italy, so famous in former times. Although all the people live in the towns, they are quite deserted and empty: they seem to exist only to indicate the places where those powerful cities stood of which history says so much.

Some people here pretend that the city of Rome alone contained formerly more people than one of the great kingdoms of Europe does to-day. There were Roman citizens who had ten, and even twenty thousand slaves, without counting those employed in their country houses; and as it

*Some countries were, in Montesquieu's time, and are now, less populous than in their earlier history; but that the modern world contains fewer people than the antique one, is an assertion for which there is no proof.

is calculated that there were four or five hundred thousand citizens, the imagination rebels at any attempt to fix the number of the inhabitants.

In Sicily, there were formerly powerful and densely peopled kingdoms, which have since disappeared: that island has nothing more notable now than volcanoes.

Greece is so deserted that it does not contain a hundredth part of its ancient inhabitants.

Spain, once so crowded, can now show only uninhabited lands; and France is nothing compared with that ancient Gaul of which Cæsar speaks.*

The countries of the north are sadly thinned; and the people no longer require, as formerly, to divide themselves, and set out in swarms, in colonies, in whole nations, to seek for new abodes.

Poland and Turkey in Europe have almost no inhabitants.

We cannot find in America the fiftieth part of the men who formed the great empires there.

Asia is hardly in a better state. Asia Minor, which contained so many powerful monarchies, and such an immense number of great cities, has now no more than two or three. As regards the greater Asia, that part which is under the Turk is not more populous; and if that part of it which is under the dominion of our kings be compared with the prosperous state in which it once was, it will be found to contain a very small part of the innumerable inhabitants which it possessed in the times of Xerxes and Darius.

As for the petty states which border these great empires, they are really deserts, such as the kingdoms of Irimetta, Circassia, and Guriel. These princes with vast territories, rule over a bare fifty thousand subjects.

Egypt is not less deficient than the other countries.

In short, I have reviewed the whole world, and found nothing but decay: I think I see the earth emerging from the ravages of pestilence and famine.

Africa has always been so little known, that one cannot speak of it so precisely as of the other parts of the world; but, dealing only with the Mediterranean shores, which have always been known, it is plain that it has fallen away

* In one sense true, as Cæsar's Gaul was covered with forests.

sadly from what it was under the Carthaginians and the Romans. To-day, its princes are so weak that they are the most inconsiderable potentates in the world.

After a calculation as exact as may be in the circumstances, I have found that there are upon the earth hardly one-tenth part of the people which there were in ancient times. And the astonishing thing is, that the depopulation goes on daily : if it continues, in ten centuries the earth will be a desert.

Here, my dear Usbek, you have the most terrible calamity that can ever happen in the world. But we have scarcely perceived it, because it has stolen upon us gradually in the course of a great many centuries, which denotes an inward defect, a secret and hidden poison, a malady of decline, afflicting human nature.

VENICE, the 10th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1718.

LETTER CXIV

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

THE earth, my dear Rhedi, is not incorruptible ; even the heavens are not : astronomers are eyewitnesses of their changes, which are the perfectly natural effects of the universal motion of matter.

The earth is subject, like the other planets, to the laws of motion ; it suffers within itself a continual strife among its elements ; the sea and the land seem to be forever at war ; each moment produces new combinations.

Men, in an abode so subject to change, are likewise in an unsettled condition : a hundred thousand causes may operate against them capable of destroying them, and much more of increasing or diminishing their number.

I do not refer to those special catastrophes, so common in history, which have destroyed whole cities and kingdoms : there are general ones which many a time have brought the human race next door to destruction.

History is full of those universal plagues which have one after the other desolated the earth. They tell of one which was so violent that it blasted the very roots of plants, and made itself felt throughout the known world, as far as the empire of China; one degree more of corruption would have destroyed, perhaps in a single day, the whole human race.

It is not two centuries since the most shameful of all diseases overran Europe, Asia, and Africa; in a very short time it worked terrible havoc; had it continued its progress with unchanging fury, it would have destroyed the race. Burdened with disease from their birth, and incapable of sustaining the duties of society, men would have perished miserably.

How would it have been, had the poison possessed a little more strength, as it would certainly have done, if, fortunately, there had not been found a remedy as powerful as any yet discovered!* Perhaps that disease, which attacks the organs of generation, would have ended by attacking generation itself.

But why do I talk of destruction that might have happened to the whole human race? Has it not already taken place? Did not the Flood reduce mankind to one single family?

There are philosophers who distinguish two creations: that of things, and that of man. They cannot believe that matter and created things have been in existence only six thousand years; that during all eternity God delayed His works, and only yesterday began to use His creative power. Was it because He could not, or because He would not? But if He could not at one time, neither could He at another. It is then because He would not; but, as time does not exist for God, if it is granted that He willed a thing once, He willed it always, and from the beginning.

However, all historians speak of a first father: they show us the origin of human nature. Is it not natural to suppose that Adam was saved from some general calamity, as Noah was, from the Flood; and that such great events have been of frequent occurrence since the creation of the world? But all destructions have not been violent. We

* Mercury.

see many parts of the earth tired out with providing subsistence for men; how do we know that the whole earth has not within itself general causes of debility, slow-working and imperceptible?

It has been a satisfaction to me to give you these general ideas before replying more particularly to your letter on the decrease of mankind which has been going on for seventeen or eighteen centuries. I will show you in a succeeding letter, that moral causes, independently of physical ones, have produced this effect.

PARIS, the 8th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXV

USBEK TO THE SAME

YOU ask from what cause the earth is less populous than it was formerly; if you give the question good heed you will see that this great difference is the result of a moral change.

Things are much altered since the Christians and Mohammedan religions divided the Roman world; these two religions have not been nearly so favorable to the propagation of the species as that of those masters of the world.

In it, polygamy was prohibited; and in that respect it had a great advantage over the Mohammedan religion; and it had another, and no less considerable advantage over Christianity in that it permitted divorce.

I find nothing so inconsistent as that plurality of wives permitted by the holy Koran, and the command to satisfy them in the same book. "Visit your wives," said the Prophet, "because you are as necessary to them as their garments, and they, as necessary to you as yours." Here is a precept which renders the life of a true Mussulman very laborious. He who has the four wives established by law, and only as many more concubines or slaves, must he not be weighted down by so many garments?

"Your wives are your tilth," the Prophet says again; "devote yourselves therefore to your labor, work for the good of your soul; and one day you will have your reward."

I look upon a good Mussulman as an athlete, destined to strive without respite, but who, soon weakened and overcome by his first toils, languishes even in the field of victory, and finds himself, so to speak, buried under his own triumphs.

Nature always works tardily, and, as it were, thriftily; her operations are never violent; even in her productions she requires temperance; she never works but by rule and measure; if she be hurried she soon falls into decline, and employs all her remaining strength in self-preservation, losing entirely her productive faculty and productive power.

It is to this state of debility that we are always reduced by the great number of our wives, fitter to exhaust us than to satisfy us. It is quite common among us to see a man in a very large seraglio with but few children; the children themselves are for the most part weak and unhealthy, and share the languor of their father.

This is not all: these women, forced to be continent, require people to guard them, who must necessarily be eunuchs; religion, jealousy, reason itself permit the approach of no others; there must be many of these guards, both to maintain peace within doors amid the endless quarrels of the women, and to prevent attempts from without. So that a man who has ten wives or concubines, must have as many eunuchs to guard them. But what a loss for society in this great number of men practically dead from their birth! What depopulation must be the result!

The female slaves, kept in the seraglio to attend along with the eunuchs on this great number of women, almost always grow old there in a sorrowful virginity; as long as they are there they cannot marry; and their mistresses, once accustomed to them, hardly ever dismiss them.

You see how many persons of both sexes one man employs in his pleasures, causing them to die to the state, and making them useless for the propagation of the species.

Constantinople and Ispahan are the capitals of the two greatest empires of the world; every interest should converge toward them, and people, attracted in a thousand ways, should come to them from all quarters. And yet these cities are themselves decaying, and will soon be destroyed, if their rulers do not cause to repair thither almost every century whole nations to repeople them. I will discuss this subject further in another letter.

PARIS, the 13th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXVI

USBEK TO THE SAME

THE Romans did not have fewer slaves than we; they had indeed more, but they made a better use of them.

Far from preventing by violent measures the multiplication of their slaves, they, on the contrary, favored it to the best of their ability; they united them in marriages, of a kind, as much as they could; by this means they filled their houses with servants of both sexes and all ages; and the state with a countless people.

Children which in time became the wealth of a master were born around him without number; he alone was responsible for their upbringing and education; the fathers, freed from that burden, followed only the inclination of nature, and multiplied without the fear of too large a family.

I have told you that among us all the slaves are employed in guarding our wives, and in nothing else; that with regard to the state they are in a perpetual lethargy; with the result that industry and agriculture are necessarily confined to a few freemen and heads of families, who apply themselves as little as possible.

It was not thus among the Romans. The republic made use of this nation of slaves to its own great benefit. Each had his own savings, which he owned on conditions

imposed by his master; and this hoard he employed in whatever direction his talent lay. One became a banker; another trafficked in cargoes; this one took to retail dealing; that one applied himself to some industry, or took to farming and cultivated the soil; there was not one of them who did not give himself with all his might to increase his savings, securing for himself in the meantime comfort in his present slavery, and the hope of future liberty; this made a diligent people and encouraged arts and industry.

These slaves, enriched by their thrift and toil, bought their freedom and became citizens. The republic was continually built up, and received into its bosom new families, in proportion as the old ones decayed.

In my future letters I shall perhaps take the opportunity to prove to you that the more men there are in a state, the more prosperous is its commerce; I shall prove as easily, that as commerce flourishes, men increase; these two things necessarily aid and abet each other.

Since that is so, how much must this enormous number of slaves, always busy, have grown and increased? Industry and plenty produced them; and they on their side produced plenty and industry.

PARIS, the 16th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXVII

USBEK TO THE SAME

HITHERTO we have discussed only Mohammedan countries, seeking the cause why they are less populous than those which were subject to the government of the Romans; let us now inquire what has produced this effect among the Christians.

Divorce, which was permitted in the Pagan religion, was forbidden by Christianity. This change, which appears at first of such slight importance, produced by degrees consequences so terrible, that one can hardly believe them.

This deprived marriage not only of all its sweetness, but attacked its very aim; the desire to tighten the knot, only

loosened it ; and instead of uniting hearts, as was pretended, it separated them forever.

Into an action where all should be so free, and in which the heart ought to have so large a share, were introduced constraint, necessity, fate itself. Disgust, caprice, incompatibility of temper were not considered at all ; the intention was to fix the heart, that is to say, to fix the most changeable and inconstant thing in nature ; people, weary of one another, and almost always badly matched, were joined in an unchanging and hopeless union, as tyrants used to unite living men to dead bodies.

Nothing contributed more to a mutual attachment than the power of divorce : husband and wife were induced to endure patiently domestic troubles, knowing that they had the power to end them ; and they often retained this power all their lives without using it, from the sole reflection that they were at liberty to do so.

It is not thus with the Christians, as their present troubles make them despair of the future. They see only that the discomforts of marriage are lasting, or rather everlasting ; hence arise disgust, discord, contempt, and so far a loss to posterity. Three years of marriage are hardly over when its aim is neglected ; then follow thirty years of coldness ; private separations take place, more enduring, and probably more baneful, than if they had been public ; the couple lead divided lives, and all to the prejudice of future generations. A man is soon surfeited with one everlasting woman, and betakes himself to harlots, a commerce shameful and opposed to society, which without fulfilling the object of marriage, represents at the best only its sensual pleasures.

If, of two persons thus united, one is not suited to nature's purpose and the propagation of the species, either constitutionally or on account of age, that party buries the other along with it and renders it as useless as it is itself.

It is not a matter of astonishment, then, to see among the Christians so many marriages producing such a small number of citizens. Divorce is abolished ; badly assorted marriages cannot be amended ; women do not pass as with

the Romans through the hands of several husbands, who in turn made the best they could of them.

I dare to say that, in a republic like Lacedæmonia, where the citizens were continually plagued by peculiar and subtle laws, and in which the state was the only family, if it had been decreed that husbands could change their wives every year, an innumerable people would have been born.

It is very difficult to understand what reason led the Christians to abolish divorce. Marriage among all the nations of the world is a contract susceptible to all kinds of stipulations, and none should be banished from it, except such as would weaken its intention; but the Christians do not look at it in that light, and have taken much trouble to explain their point of view. They make out that marriage does not consist in sensual pleasure; on the contrary, as I have already told you, they seem to wish to exclude that as much as possible; with them it is a symbol, a type, and something mysterious which I do not understand.

PARIS, the 19th of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXVIII

USBEK TO THE SAME

THE prohibition of divorce is not the only cause of the depopulation of Christian countries; the great number of eunuchs which they have among them is another not less important.

I mean those priests and dervishes of both sexes who devote themselves to perpetual continence: this is with the Christians the virtue of virtues; in which I fail to understand them, not perceiving how that can be a virtue which results in nothing.

I find that their learned men distinctly contradict themselves, when they say that marriage is holy, and that celibacy, the opposite of marriage, is holier still; without considering that in matters of teaching and fundamental doctrines, the expedient is always the best.

The number of people professing celibacy is enormous. Formerly fathers condemned their children to it from the cradle; now they dedicate themselves from the age of fourteen, which amounts to pretty much the same thing.

The practice of continence has destroyed more men than plagues and the most sanguinary wars. In every religious house we see an unending family, where nobody is born, and which depends for its upkeep upon the rest of the world. These houses are always open, like so many pits, in which future generations are entombed.

This is a very different policy from that of the Romans, who instituted penal laws against those who rebelled against marriage, and wished to enjoy a liberty so opposed to the public good.

I am only referring here to Catholic countries. The Protestant religion grants the right of producing children to everybody; it permits neither priests nor dervishes; and if, in the establishment of that religion, which restored everything to an earlier order, its founders had not been constantly accused of incontinence, there can be no doubt that, after having made the practice of marriage universal, they would have lightened the yoke still further, and would have ended by removing entirely the barrier which separates, in this particular, the Nazarene and Mohammed.

But however that may be, it is certain that their religion gives the Protestants a great advantage over the Catholics.

I dare to say that, in the present state of Europe, it is not possible for the Catholic religion to exist there for five hundred years.

Before the humiliation of the power of Spain, the Catholics were much stronger than the Protestants. Little by little the latter have arrived at an equality. The Protestants will become richer and more powerful, and the Catholics will grow weaker.

The Protestant countries ought to be, and are, in fact, more populous than the Catholic ones; from which it follows, firstly, that their revenue is greater, because it increases in proportion to the number of those who pay taxes; secondly, that their lands are better cultivated; lastly, that commerce is more prosperous, because there are

more people who have fortunes to make; and that, with increased wants, there is an increase of resources to supply them. When there are only people enough to cultivate the land, trade must perish; and if there are no more than are necessary to carry on trade, agriculture must go to the wall; that is to say, both would be ruined at the same time, because devotion to the one can only be at the expense of the other.

As to Catholic countries, not only is agriculture abandoned, but industry itself is mischievous; it consists only in learning five or six words of a dead language. When a man has made this provision for himself, he need not trouble himself more about his fortune; in the cloister he finds a peaceful life, which would have cost him in the world, care and toil.

This is not all. The dervishes hold in their hands almost all the wealth of the state; they are a miserly crew, always getting, and never giving; they are continually hoarding their income to acquire capital. All this wealth falls as it were into a palsy: it is not circulated, it is not employed in trade, in industry, or in manufactures.

There is no Protestant prince who does not levy upon his people much heavier taxes than the Pope draws from his subjects; yet the latter are poor, while the former live in affluence. Commerce puts life into all ranks among the Protestants, and celibacy lays its hand of death upon all interests among the Catholics.

PARIS, the 26th of the first moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXIX

USBEK TO THE SAME

HAVING nothing further to say of Asia and Europe, let us pass on to Africa. We can really speak of nothing but its shores, as we do not know the interior.

The Barbary coast, where the Mohammedan religion is established, is not so populous as it was in the times of

the Romans, for the reasons I have already given. As to the Guinea coast, it must be terribly depopulated, since for two hundred years the petty kings or village chiefs have been selling their subjects to the European princes for transportation to their American colonies.

A very remarkable thing about this America is, that while it receives every year new inhabitants, it is itself a desert, profiting nothing from the continual drain on Africa. Those slaves, transported into a foreign clime, perish there in thousands; and the work in the mines in which natives and foreigners are constantly employed, the poisonous vapors which issue from them, and the quicksilver which is continually in use, destroy them without remedy.

There is nothing more absurd than to cause countless numbers of men to perish in extracting from the bowels of the earth gold and silver, metals in themselves absolutely useless, and which constitute wealth only because they have been chosen as the symbols of it.

PARIS, the last of the moon of Chahban, 1718.

LETTER CXX

USBEK TO THE SAME

THE fertility of a people depends sometimes on the most trifling circumstances in the world; so that often nothing more is necessary to increase its numbers than to give a new direction to its imagination.

The Jews, always being exterminated, and always increasing again, have repaired their continual losses and destructions by the single hope, shared by all their families, that from one of them shall spring a powerful king who will be the master of the world.

The ancient kings of Persia had such an immense number of subjects, simply because of that dogma of the Magian religion which declares that the deeds of men most acceptable to God are to beget a child, to till a field, and to plant a tree.

If the population of China is so enormous, it is only the result of a certain way of thinking ; for since children look upon their parents as gods, reverence them as such in this life, and honor them after death with sacrifices by means of which they believe that their souls, absorbed into Tyen,* recommence a new existence, each one is bent on increasing a family so dutiful in this life, and so necessary for the next.

On the other hand, the Mohammedan countries become daily more deserted, because of a belief, all-hallowed as it is, which fails not of most baneful effects when it is deeply rooted in the mind. We look upon ourselves as travelers, who ought to think only of another country : useful and lasting works, care to make provision for our children, projects which look beyond our own short and fleeting lives, seem to us somewhat absurd. Easy minded as regards the present, and without anxiety for the future, we trouble neither to repair public buildings, to reclaim waste lands, nor to cultivate those which are suited for tillage ; we live generally in a state of indifference, and allow Providence to do everything.

It is a spirit of vanity which established in Europe the unjust law of primogeniture, so unfavorable to propagation in that it fastens the attention of the father upon one of his children, and turns his eyes from all the others, forcing him in order to make a substantial fortune for one to prevent the settlement of several ; and lastly, in that it destroys equality among citizens, which constitutes all their wealth.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

LETTER CXXI

USBEK TO THE SAME

COUNTRIES inhabited by savages are usually thinly peopled, on account of the dislike which they almost always have for toil and tillage. This unfortunate dislike is so strong, that when they invoke a curse against one of their enemies, they can wish him no greater evil

* The heaven of the Chinese.

than to be reduced to plow a field, believing that hunting and fishing are the only exercises worthy of them.

But, as there are often years in which hunting and fishing are very unproductive, they are desolated by frequent famines; without considering that game and fish are never abundant enough in any country to support a numerous people, because animals always forsake thickly inhabited districts.

Besides, savage hordes, each numbering two or three hundred people, separated from each other, and having interests as divided as those of two empires, cannot maintain themselves, because they have not the resources of great states, whose members are all in accord, and work together for each other's good.

There is another custom not less baneful than the first; the cruel habit which the women have of procuring abortion, in order that their pregnancy may not make them disagreeable to their husbands.

There are dreadful laws against this crime, which are carried to excess. Every unmarried woman who does not declare her pregnancy before a magistrate is punished with death if her offspring dies:* shame and modesty, accidents even, are no excuses.

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

LETTER CXXII

USBEK TO THE SAME

THE ordinary effect of colonies is to weaken the countries from which they are taken, without peopling those which are colonized.†

Men ought to stay where they are: the change from a good climate to a bad one produces diseases, and others spring from the mere change itself.

*By an edict of Henry II., in 1556.

† History proves the contrary.

The air, like the plants, is loaded with the particles of the soil of each country. It acts upon us in such a way as to fix our constitutions. When we are transported to a foreign country we become ill. The fluids being accustomed to a certain consistency and the solids to a certain arrangement, and both to a certain degree of motion, cannot put up with others, and resist a new order.

When a country is uninhabited, it is an indication of some particular defect in the nature of the soil or of the atmosphere: so that when men are removed from an agreeable clime to such a country, exactly the opposite of what was intended is done.

The Romans knew this by experience: they banished all their criminals to Sardinia, and sent the Jews there too. They had little difficulty in consoling themselves for their loss, on account of the contempt in which they held these wretched creatures.

The great Shah Abbas, wishing to deprive the Turks of the means of supporting large armies on the frontier, transported almost all the Armenians out of their own country, and sent more than twenty thousand families into the province of Guilan, where they nearly all perished in a very short time.

None of the transportations of people into Constantinople has ever succeeded.

The immense numbers of negroes already mentioned have not peopled America.*

Since the destruction of the Jews under Adrian, Palestine has been uninhabited.

It must therefore be admitted that great depopulations are almost irreparable, because a people whose numbers are brought down to a certain point, remains there; and if by chance it recovers itself, it must be the work of ages.

If, in a state of decay, the least of the circumstances which I have mentioned comes to pass, a people not only never recovers, but falls off daily and approaches annihilation.

The expulsion of the Moors from Spain is still as much felt as at the time it happened; instead of the void being filled up, it grows greater every day.

* Montesquieu did not foresee the "Negro question."

Since the devastation of America, the Spaniards, who have taken the place of the ancient inhabitants, have not been able to repeople it: on the contrary, by a fatality, which I ought rather to call an instance of Divine justice, the destroyers are destroying themselves, and waste away daily.

Princes ought not therefore to think of peopling large countries by means of colonies. I do not say that they are not sometimes successful; there are climes so favorable, that the human race always multiplies there; witness the isles* which have been peopled by some sick folks abandoned by passing vessels, and who soon recovered their health there.

But, if these colonies were to succeed, in place of increasing power, they only divide it; unless they should happen to be of small extent, like those which are occupied for trading purposes.

The Carthaginians, like the Spaniards, discovered America, or, at any rate, certain large islands with which they carried on an enormous trade; but, when they beheld the number of their inhabitants decreasing, that wise republic forbade its subjects to carry on that trade, or to sail to these islands.

I dare affirm that, if in place of sending the Spaniards into the Indies, the Indians and cross-breeds had been transported to Spain; if its scattered people had been returned to it, and supposing only half of its great colonies had been preserved, Spain would have become the most formidable European power.

An empire may be compared to a tree whose branches, if too widely spread, draw all the sap from the trunk, and are of use only to give shade.

Nothing is fitter to cure in princes the rage for distant conquests than the example of the Portuguese and the Spaniards.

These two nations having conquered with inconceivable rapidity immense kingdoms, more amazed at their victories than the conquered peoples at their defeat, considered the means of preserving them, and chose each of them for that purpose a different method.

* The author probably means the Isle of Bourbon.—(M.)

The Spaniards, despairing to keep the conquered nations faithful to them, took the plan of exterminating them, and of sending to Spain for dutiful subjects: never was a dreadful design carried out with greater thoroughness. A people as numerous as all those of Europe together, was seen to disappear from the earth, on the arrival of these barbarians, who, in discovering the Indies, seemed only to have thought of discovering to mankind the utmost reach of cruelty.

By that barbarity, they held the country under their government. Judge from this what baleful things conquests are, since such are their effects. For, indeed, this horrible expedient was the only one.* How could they have kept so many millions of men in subjection? How could they have carried on a civil war at such a distance? What would have become of them, had they given these people time to recover from the consternation caused by the advent of these new gods, and from the terrors of their thunders?

As to the Portuguese, they took an entirely opposite course; they did not employ cruelty, and were consequently very soon expelled from all the countries which they had discovered. The Dutch favored the rebellion of their foreign subjects against the Portuguese, and profited by it.

What prince would envy the lot of these conquerors? Who would wish for conquests on these conditions? One nation was soon driven out from its conquests; the other made them into deserts, and made a desert of its own country at the same time.

It is the destiny of heroes to ruin themselves by conquering countries which they suddenly lose, or by subjecting nations which they themselves are obliged to destroy; like that madman who wasted his substance in buying statues which he cast into the sea, and glasses which he broke as soon as bought.

PARIS, the 18th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

*Not the only one; there is the method by which England has retained India.

LETTER CXXIII

USBEK TO THE SAME

THE propagation of the species is wonderfully aided by a mild government. All republics are a standing proof of this; especially Switzerland and Holland, which, with regard to the nature of the land, are the two worst countries in Europe, and which are yet the most populous.

Nothing attracts strangers more than liberty, and its accompaniment, wealth: the latter is sought after for itself, and our necessity leads us into those countries in which we find the former.

Mankind multiplies in a country which affords abundance for the children, without diminishing in the least the parents' provision.

That very equality of the citizens which generally produces equality in their fortunes, brings plenty and vigor into all the parts of the body politic, and spreads these blessings throughout the whole state.

It is not so in countries subject to arbitrary power: the prince, the courtiers, and a few private persons, possess all the wealth, while all the rest groan in extreme poverty.

If a man is not well off, and feels that his children would be poorer than he, he will not marry; or if he does, he will be afraid of having too great a number of children, who would complete the ruin of his fortune, and sink even lower than their father.

I admit that the boor or peasant, once married, will increase the race without any regard to his poverty or wealth; that consideration does not affect him; he has always a safe inheritance to leave his children, and that is his plow; so nothing withholds him from following blindly the instincts of nature.

But of what use to a state are those crowds of children which waste away in misery? They perish almost as rapidly as they are born: they never thrive: feeble and impotent, they die retail in a thousand ways, or are carried

off wholesale by those frequent epidemics which poverty and bad diet always produce: those who escape attain the age of manhood without possessing its vigor, and waste away during the rest of their lives.

Men are like plants which never flourish if they are not well cultivated: among poor people, the race declines and sometimes even degenerates.

France supplies a great proof of all this. During the late wars, the dread which all the youths had of being enrolled in the militia forced them to marry, and that at too tender an age, and in the bosom of poverty. A great many children were born of these numerous marriages who are not now to be found in France, because poverty, famine, and disease carried them off.

Now if, of a kingdom so well governed as France, and with such a good climate, remarks like these may be made, what shall be said of other states?

PARIS, the 23d of the moon of Rhamazan, 1718.

LETTER CXXIV

USBEK TO THE MOLLAH MEHEMET ALI, GUARDIAN OF THE THREE TOMBS, AT KOUM

TO WHAT end are the fasts of the imans, and the sackcloth of the mollahs? The hand of God has twice lain heavy upon the children of the law: the sun has obscured his beams and seems to shine only upon their overthrow: their armies assemble to be dispersed like dust.

The empire of the Osmanli is shaken by two defeats more disastrous than it ever experienced before. A Christian Mufti supports it with great difficulty: the grand vizier of Germany* is the scourge of God, sent to chastise the followers of Omar; he carries everywhere the wrath of Heaven, enraged at their rebellion and their treachery.

*Prince Eugene, who defeated the Turks at Peterwardein, took Belgrade in 1717, and concluded the advantageous peace of Passarowitz in 1718.

Holy spirit of the imans, thou weepest night and day over the children of the Prophet, whom the detestable Omar misled: thy bowels are moved at the sight of their misfortunes: thou desirest their conversion, and not their perdition: thou wouldst have them united under the standard of Hali through the tears of the saints; and not scattered among the mountains and the deserts through terror of the infidels.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXV*

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

WHAT can be the motive of those immense gratuities which princes lavish upon their courtiers? Is it to attach them to themselves? They have gained them already as far as that is possible. And besides, should they gain some of their subjects by bribery, they would lose a great many others, impoverished by the very same means.

When I consider the situation of princes, always surrounded by greedy and insatiable men, I cannot but pity them; and I pity them still more, when they have not the strength to resist demands — always a task to those who need to ask for nothing.

I never hear talk of their liberality, of the favors and pensions which they grant, but I give myself up to a thousand reflections: a throng of ideas present themselves to my mind: it seems to me that I hear the following decree published: —

"The indefatigable courage of some of our subjects in suing for pensions, having taxed without intermission our royal magnificence, we have at length granted the multitude of requests presented to us, which hitherto have been the greatest anxiety of the throne. Some have represented to us that they have never failed since our accession to

*The sixth of the letters added in 1754.

the crown to attend our levees; that we have always seen them in our progresses as motionless as posts; and that they have raised themselves on the highest shoulders to gaze at our serenity. We have even received several petitions on the part of some members of the fair sex, who have begged to draw attention to the notorious fact that they are very circumspect in their conversation: some very ancient dames have desired us, with shaking heads, to consider that they adorned the courts of the kings, our predecessors; and that if the generals of their armies have made the state formidable by their warlike deeds, they have made the court not less celebrated by their intrigues. And so, wishing to be bounteous to these suppliants, and to grant them all their desires, we have decreed what follows: —

"That every laborer, having five children, shall daily curtail by one-fifth the bread which he gives them. We also admonish all fathers of families to decrease the share of each child in as just a proportion as possible.

"We expressly forbid all those who are engaged in the cultivation of their estates, or who rent them out in farms, to make any improvement in them of what kind soever.

"We decree that all persons engaged in base and mechanical trades, who have never attended a levee of Our Majesty, shall in future purchase clothes for themselves, their wives, and their children only once in four years: we further most strictly forbid them those little merry-makings which they have been accustomed to hold in their families on the principal festivals of the year.

"And, inasmuch as we are advised that the greater part of the citizens of our good towns are wholly occupied in providing establishments for their daughters, who have made themselves esteemed in our state only by a solemn and tedious modesty; we decree that their fathers shall delay their marriage until, having attained the age prescribed by the statutes, they can insist on being portioned. We forbid our magistrates to provide for the education of their children."

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXVI

RICA TO * * *

IT IS a puzzling thing in all religions to give any idea of the pleasures ordained for those who live well. It is easy to terrify the wicked with a long list of the torments which await them; but who knows what to promise the virtuous? Joys seem by nature to be of short duration, the imagination can hardly picture them otherwise.

I have seen descriptions of Paradise sufficient to make all sensible people give up their hopes of it: some make the happy shades play incessantly on the flute; others condemn them to the torture of an everlasting promenade; while others, who represent them as dreaming on high of their mistresses below, are of opinion that a period of a hundred million years is not sufficient to overcome a taste for the pains of love.

I remember, in this connection, a story which I heard told by a man who had been in the country of the Mogul; it shows that the Indian priests are as fertile as others in their ideas of the pleasures of Paradise.

A woman who had just lost her husband, went in due form to the governor of the city demanding permission to burn herself; but since, in the countries subject to the Mohammedans, they have abolished to the best of their ability that cruel custom, he refused her absolutely.

When she saw that her prayers were in vain, she flew into a transport of rage. "Look you," said she, "how you torment me! A poor woman is not even allowed to burn herself when she has a mind to! Did one ever see the like! My mother, my aunt, my sisters, were all decently burnt! And, when I come to ask permission of this confounded governor, he gets angry, and begins raging like a madman."

A young bonze* happened to be present. "Infidel," said the governor to him, "is it you who have set on this

* Bonzes are the Buddhist priests of China, whom Montesquieu seems to have confounded with the Brahmins of India.

woman to commit this folly?" "No," said he, "I never spoke to her; but if she believes as I do, she will complete her sacrifice; she will perform an action pleasing to the god Brahma: she will also be well rewarded, for she will find her husband in the other world, and begin with him a second marriage." "What do you say?" cried the woman, astonished. "I shall find my husband again? Ah! I will not burn myself then. He was jealous, peevish, and besides, so old, that if the god Brahma has not brought about some improvement in him, assuredly he has no need of me. Burn myself for him! . . . not even the end of my finger to take him from the bottom of hell. Two old bonzes who misled me, and who knew what kind of life I led with him, took care to tell me nothing of this; if the god Brahma has no other present to make me, I renounce this felicity. Mr. Governor, I will be a Mohammedan. And for you," turning to the bonze, "you can, if you like, go and tell my husband that I am very well."

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXVII

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

I EXPECT you here to-morrow: meantime I send you your letters from Ispahan. Mine bring word that the ambassador of the Great Mogul* has received orders to quit the kingdom. They add that the prince, the uncle of the king,† who has charge of his education, has been arrested, conducted to a castle, where he is closely guarded, and deprived of all his honors. The fate of this prince moves me, and I pity him.

*By the Great Mogul is here meant the King of Spain. His ambassador is the Prince of Cellamare, who was arrested and sent across the frontier for conspiring against the Regent with the Duke and Duchess of Maine.

†The Duke of Maine.

I own, Usbek, that I have never beheld the tears fall from the eyes of any one without deep sympathy: my humanity feels for the unhappy, as if they only were human; and great people even, toward whom my heart is hardened when they are prosperous, gain my affection in adversity.

Indeed, in the time of their prosperity what need have they of useless affection? It comes too near equality. They prefer respect, which requires no return. As soon, however, as they have fallen from their greatness, there is nothing left to recall it to them but our lamentation.

I find an admirable simplicity, and an equally admirable greatness, in the words of a prince, who, being in great danger of falling into the hands of his enemies, said to his courtiers, who stood weeping round him, "I see by your tears that I am still your king."

PARIS, the 3d of the moon of Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CXXVIII

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

YOU have heard much talk of the famous king of Sweden:* while he was visiting the trenches, with an engineer as his sole companion, during the siege of a town in a kingdom called Norway, he received a wound in the head, of which he died. His prime minister† was immediately arrested, and the assembled states condemned him to lose his head.

He was accused of a very grave crime; that of having slandered the nation, and of having caused the king to lose confidence in it: an offense which, in my judgment, deserves a thousand deaths.

For, in short, if it is a villainous action to blacken the character of the meanest of his subjects in the eyes of a prince, what must it be to traduce an entire nation, and to

* Charles XII. of Sweden. † Baron Gortz.

withdraw from it the good will of him whom providence has set over it for its welfare.

I would have men talk with kings, as the angels talked with our holy Prophet.

You know that, in the sacred banquets, when the king of kings descends from the most sublime throne in the world to converse with his slaves, I laid a severe injunction on myself to restrain an unruly tongue: no one ever heard escape from me a single word which could be disagreeable to the meanest of his subjects. When it behoved me to cease to be sober, I never ceased to be a gentleman; and in that test of our fidelity I risked my life, but never my virtue.

I know not how it happens, but the wickedest king is hardly ever so bad as his minister; if he commits a vile action, it has nearly always been suggested to him: thus the ambition of princes is never so dangerous as the baseness of their advisers. But can you understand how a man who was yesterday made minister, and may perhaps to-morrow be disgraced, can become in a moment his own enemy, the enemy of his family, of his country, and of the people who are yet to be born of those he is about to oppress?

A prince has passions; the minister works on them: it is in that way that he manages his ministry: that is his only aim, nor does he desire another. The courtiers mislead him by their applause; and he flatters him more dangerously by his advice, by the designs with which he inspires him, and by the maxims which he proposes to him.

PARIS, the 25th of the moon of Saphar, 1719.

LETTER CXXIX

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

As I was passing the other day over the Pont-Neuf with one of my friends, he met a man of his acquaintance, who, he said, was a geometer; and he looked it, for he was in a deep meditation: my friend had to tug at his sleeve for a long time and to shake him to bring him

down to himself, he was so much occupied with a curve which had tormented him perhaps for more than a week. There was a most polite interchange of compliments, and they imparted to each other some items of literary news. Their talk continued until we came to the door of a coffee-house, which I entered with them.

I noticed that our geometer was received by everybody with marked cordiality, and that the coffee-house waiters made much more of him than of two musketeers who were in a corner. As for him, he appeared to be very well pleased with the company; for he unwrinkled his face a little, and fell a-smiling, as if there had not been the least particle of geometry in him.

However, his exact mind measured everything that was said in the conversation. He seemed like a man in a garden, who with a sword cuts off the head of every flower which rises above its neighbors. A martyr to his own accuracy, he was offended by a witty remark, as weak sight is annoyed by too strong a light. Nothing was indifferent to him provided it was true. Thus his conversation was very remarkable. He had come that day from the country with a man who had been to see a fine *château* and splendid gardens; but he himself had only seen a building sixty feet long and thirty-five wide, and a parallelogrammic grove of ten acres: he would have liked very much that the rules of perspective had been so observed that the walks of the avenues might have appeared throughout of the same width; and for that purpose he would have supplied an infallible method. He appeared to be much pleased with a dial which he had discovered there of a very peculiar make; and he became very angry with a learned man, who sat beside me, and unfortunately asked him if this dial indicated the Babylonian hours. A newsmonger spoke of the bombardment of the castle of Fontarabia; and he at once told us the properties of the line which the bombs described in the air; and, delighted with this bit of knowledge, he was quite content to be wholly ignorant of the success of the bombardment. A man complained that in the preceding winter he had been ruined by a flood. "What you say is very agreeable to me," said

the geometer. "I find that I am not mistaken in the observation which I made, and that there fell upon the earth two inches of water more than in the year before."

A moment after he left, and we followed him. As he walked very fast, and neglected to look before him, he ran full tilt against another man: they struck each other violently; and each rebounded from the collision in proportion to his speed and weight. When they had recovered somewhat from their dizziness, this man, pressing his hand on his forehead, said to the geometer, "I am very glad you ran against me, for I have great news to tell you: I have just published my 'Horace.'" "How!" exclaimed the geometer; "it is two thousand years since 'Horace' was published." "You do not understand me," replied the other. "It is a translation of that ancient author which I have given to the world: I have been engaged as a translator for twenty years."

"What, sir!" rejoined the geometer; "have you been twenty years without thinking? You are only the mouthpiece of others." "Sir," replied the savant, "do you not think that I have done the public a great service in making them familiar with good authors?" "I am not so sure of that: I esteem as highly as any one the sublime geniuses whom you have travestied: but you are not as they; for though you translate forever, you will never be translated.

"Translations are like copper money, which have quite the same value as a gold piece, and are even of greater use among the people; but they are base coin and always light.

"You wish, you say, to revive among us those illustrious dead; and I admit that you give them indeed a body; but you do not give the body life: the animating spirit is always wanting.

"Why do you not engage rather in seeking for some of those glorious truths which a simple calculation discovers for us every day?" After this piece of advice they parted, I imagine not in the best of humor with each other.

PARIS, the last day of the second moon
of Rebiab, 1719.

LETTER CXXX

RICA TO * * *

IN THIS letter I shall tell you of a certain tribe called the Quidnuncs, who assemble in a splendid garden,* where they are always indolently busy. They are utterly useless to the state, and half a century of their talk has no more effect than would be produced by a silence of the same length; yet they imagine themselves of consequence, because they converse about magnificent projects and discuss great interests.

The basis of their conversation is a frivolous and ridiculous curiosity: there is no cabinet, however mysterious, whose secrets they do not pretend to fathom; they will not admit that they are ignorant of anything; they know how many wives our august Sultan has, and how many children he begets every year; and, although they go to no expense for spies, they are informed of the measures he is taking to humble the Emperor of Turkey and the Great Mogul.

Hardly have they exhausted the present when they plunge into the future, and stealing a march on Providence, anticipate it in all its dealings with men. They take a general in hand, and after having praised him for a thousand follies which he has not committed, they prepare for him a thousand others which also will never come to pass.

They make armies fly like cranes, and overturn walls like a house of cards; they have bridges on all the rivers, secret paths in all the mountains, immense arsenals in burning deserts; they lack nothing but common sense.

A man with whom I lodged received a letter from a Quidnunc, which, as it seemed to me remarkable, I kept. Here it is: —

"SIR, — I am seldom mistaken in my surmises on the affairs of the day. On the 1st of January, 1711, I foretold that the emperor Joseph would die in the course of a year; it is true that, as he was then quite well, I con-

*The Tuileries.

ceived that I would be derided, if I explained my meaning too clearly; which caused me to employ terms somewhat enigmatic; but rational people understood me well enough. On the 17th of April, in the same year, he died of the smallpox.

"As soon as war was declared between the Emperor and the Turks, I went through every corner of the Tuileries in search of our gentlemen: and having gathered them together near the basin, I prophesied to them that Belgrade would be besieged and taken. I was fortunate enough to have my prophesy fulfilled. It is true that toward the middle of the siege, I wagered a hundred pistoles that it would be taken on the 18th of August;* it was not taken till the day after: how tantalizing to lose by so little!

"When I saw the Spanish fleet disembark in Sardinia, I judged that it would conquer it: I said so, and it proved true. Puffed up with this success, I added that the victorious fleet would land at Final, in order to conquer the Milanese. As this opinion encountered much opposition, I determined to support it nobly: I wagered fifty pistoles, and lost again; for that devil of an Alberoni, violating the treaty, sent his fleet to Sicily, and deceived at one and the same time two great politicians, the Duke of Savoy and myself.

"All this, sir, has disconcerted me so much, that I have resolved to continue prophesying, but never to bet. At the Tuileries formerly the practice of betting was quite unknown, and the late Count L.† would hardly permit it; but, since a crowd of *petits-maîtres* have got in among us, we don't know where we are. Hardly have we opened our mouths to report a piece of news, when one of these youngsters offers to bet against it.

"The other day, as I was opening my manuscript, and fixing my spectacles on my nose, one of those swaggering blades, catching promptly at the pause between my first and second words, said to me, 'I bet you a hundred pistoles that it's not.' I behaved as if I had not heard this piece of extravagance; and, resuming in a louder voice, I

* 1717.— (M.)

† The Count of Lionne.

said, 'the Marshal of * * *, having learned . . .' 'That is false,' cried he. 'Your news is always extravagant; there is an absence of common sense in all that.'

"I beg you, sir, to favor me with the loan of thirty pistoles; for I confess that these bets have almost ruined me. Herewith I send you copies of two letters which I have written to the minister. I am," etc.

Letters of a Quidnunc to the Minister

"My Lord,— I am the most loyal subject the king ever had. It was I who constrained one of my friends to undertake a scheme I had formed of a book, proving that Louis the Great was the greatest of all the princes who have deserved that title. I have been engaged for a long time on another work, which will increase the glory of our nation still further, if your highness will grant me a privilege: * my design is to prove that, since the beginning of the monarchy, the French have never been beaten, and that what historians have hitherto written of our defeats is the merest invention. I am obliged to correct them on many occasions; and I flatter myself that I shine above all as a critic. I am, my lord," etc.

"My Lord,— As we have lost the Count of L.,† we beg you to have the goodness to allow us to elect a president. Confusion reigns at all our meetings; and state affairs are not so thoroughly discussed as before: our young folks live without the slightest regard for their elders, and without any discipline among themselves: it is exactly like the council of Rehoboam, where the young overbore the old. We point out to them in vain that we were in peaceable possession of the Tuileries twenty years before they were born: I believe they will at last drive us out; and that, being forced to quit these quarters, where we have so often called up the shades of the French heroes, we will have to hold our meetings in the king's garden or in some more out-of-the-way place. I am . . ."

Paris, the 7th of the second moon of Gemmadi, 1719.

* That is, to publish.

† The Count of Lionne.

LETTER CXXXI*

RHEDI TO RICA, AT PARIS

NOTHING has interested me more since my arrival in Europe than the history and origin of the republics. You know that most Asiatics have not only no notion of this form of government, but that their imagination is unable to conceive the possibility of there being any other in the world than despotism.

The first governments of which we know anything were monarchical; it was only by chance, and in the course of ages, that republics were formed.

Greece, having been destroyed by a flood, new inhabitants came to people it; it drew almost all its colonies from Egypt and the neighboring countries of Asia; and as these countries were governed by kings, the races which came from them were governed in the same way. But the tyranny of these princes becoming intolerable, they threw off the yoke, and from the ruins of so many kingdoms sprang those republics which made Greece so prosperous, and the only cultured nation among a crowd of barbarians.

Love of liberty, and hatred of kings, preserved the independence of Greece for a long time, and extended far and wide the republican form of government. The Greek cities found allies in Asia Minor; they sent thither colonies as free as themselves, which served them as a rampart against the attacks of the kings of Persia. This is not all: Greece peopled Italy; and Italy, Spain, and perhaps Gaul. Every one knows that the wonderful Hesperia, so famous among the ancients, was at first Greece, regarded by its neighbors as an abode of bliss. The Greeks, who failed to find at home that happy country, went to Italy in search of it; the inhabitants of Italy, to Spain; and those of Spain, to Bettica Portugal; so that all these countries bore the name of Hesperia among the ancients. These Greek colonies brought with them a spirit of liberty derived from

*This letter contains the gist of the *Esprit des Lois*.

that delightful land. It is on this account that we hardly ever hear of a monarchy in Italy, Spain, or Gaul in these remote times. It will shortly appear that the peoples of the north and of Germany were not less free; and if traces of kingly government are found among them, it is because the chiefs of armies or republics have been mistaken for monarchs.

All this took place in Europe, for Asia and Africa have always been oppressed by despots, with the exception of some cities in Asia Minor already mentioned, and the Carthaginian republic in Africa.

The world was divided between two powerful republics: that of Rome and that of Carthage. Nothing is better known than the beginnings of the Roman republic, and there is nothing of which we have less knowledge than the origin of that of Carthage. Of the African princes who succeeded Dido, and how they lost their power, we know absolutely nothing. The wonderful rise of the Roman republic would have been of immense benefit to the world, if there had not existed an unjust distinction between the Roman citizens and the conquered nations; if the governors of provinces had received less power; if the righteous laws enacted to prevent their tyranny had been observed, and if, to render these laws of no effect, the governors had not employed the very wealth amassed by their injustice.

Liberty would seem to have been intended for the genius of the European races, and slavery for that of the Asiatics. In vain the Romans offered that priceless treasure to the Cappadocians. That mean-spirited nation refused it, and rushed into slavery with the same eagerness with which other races fly to liberty.

Cæsar destroyed the Roman republic, and subjected it to arbitrary power.

For a long time Europe groaned under the violence of a military government, and the gentle Roman sway was changed into cruel oppression.

Meantime an immense number of unknown races came out of the north, and poured like torrents into the Roman provinces: finding it as easy to conquer as to rob, they dismembered the empire, and founded kingdoms. These

peoples were free, and they put such restrictions on the authority of their kings, that they were properly only chiefs or generals. Thus these kingdoms, although founded by force, never endured the yoke of the conqueror. When the peoples of Asia, such as the Turks and the Tartars, made conquests, being subject to the will of one person, they thought only of providing him with new subjects, and of establishing by force of arms his reign of might; but the peoples of the north, free in their own countries, having seized the Roman provinces, did not give their chiefs much power. Some of these races, indeed, like the Vandals in Africa, and the Goths in Spain, deposed their kings when they ceased to please them; and, among others, the power of the prince was limited in a thousand different ways; a great number of lords partook it with him; a war was never undertaken without their consent; the spoils were divided between the chief and the soldiers; and the laws were made in national assemblies. Here you have the fundamental principle of all those states which were formed from the ruins of the Roman Empire.

VENICE, the 20th of the moon of Rhegeb, 1719.

LETTER CXXXII

RICA TO * * *

FIVE or six months ago I happened to be in a coffee-house, where I observed a gentleman well enough dressed who had the ear of the company; he spoke of the pleasure which life in Paris gave him, and lamented that the state of his affairs obliged him to pine away in the country. "I have," said he, "fifteen thousand livres of income from land, and I should think myself a happier man if I had a quarter of that property in money and in portable effects. In vain I put the screw on my tenants, and burden them with the expenses of lawsuits: it only makes them less solvable; I can never manage to see a

hundred pistoles at a time. If my debts amounted to ten thousand francs, all my lands would be seized, and I would be brought to the workhouse."

I left without having paid much attention to all this talk; but, finding myself yesterday in that quarter, I entered the same house, and there saw a solemn man, with a long, pale face, who, in the midst of five or six chatterers, seemed sad and thoughtful, until he suddenly burst into the conversation, and said, in a loud voice, "Yes, gentlemen, I am ruined; I have nothing to live on, for I have at present at home two hundred thousand livres in bank notes,* and a hundred thousand crowns in money; my situation is frightful; I thought myself rich, and here I am a beggar; if I had only a small estate to which I could retire, I would be sure at least of a livelihood, but I have not as much land as would fill this hat."

I happened to turn my head to the other side, and saw another man grimacing like one possessed. "Who can be trusted now?" cried he. "There is a traitor, whom I thought so much my friend, that I lent him my money; and he has paid it back! What abominable treachery! Whatever he may do now, in my opinion he will always be disgraced."†

Quite near him was a very ill-dressed man, who, raising his eyes to heaven, said, "God bless the schemes of our ministers! May stocks rise to two thousand livres, and may I see all the lackeys of Paris richer than their masters!" I had the curiosity to ask what he was. "He is a very poor man," they said, "with a very poor profession: he is a genealogist, and he hopes that his art will become profitable if fortunes continue to be made, and that all the *nouveaux* RICHES will have need of him to improve their names, polish up their ancestors, and adorn their coaches; he imagines that he is about to make as many people of quality as he wants to, and he trembles with joy at the thought of an increased practice."

*The paper of the Bank having become worthless, the holders of bills had to pay their value in cash into the Treasury.

†The depreciated paper retained in law its nominal value, so that a debtor could ruin his creditor by paying him in bank bills.

Lastly, I saw a pale, thin man come in, whom I recognized for a Quidnunc before he had got seated; he was not one of those who are sure of victory in face of every reverse, and always predict triumphs and trophies; he was, on the contrary, a weak-kneed brother, whose news was always doleful. "Things have taken a very bad turn for us in Spain," he said; "we have no cavalry on the frontier, and it is feared that Prince Pio, who has a large force, will fleece the whole of Languedoc." Opposite me there sat a philosopher in shabby clothes, who held the Quidnunc in contempt, and shrugged his shoulders in proportion as the other grew loud. I approached him, and he whispered to me, "You see how this fop has plagued us for an hour with his fears for Languedoc; and I, who detected yesterday evening a spot in the sun, which, if it increases, may throw nature generally into a state of stagnation — I have not said a word about it."

PARIS, the 17th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXIII

RICA TO * * *

THE other day I visited a great library in a convent of dervishes, to whose care it has been intrusted, and who are obliged to admit all comers at certain hours. On entering I saw a grave-looking man, who walked up and down in the midst of a prodigious number of volumes which surrounded him. I approached him, and asked him to tell me what books those were which I saw better bound than others. "Sir," he replied, "I live here in a strange land, where I know no one. Many people ask me similar questions; but you can easily understand how I cannot read all these books to satisfy them; my librarian will tell you all you wish, for he employs himself night and day in deciphering all you see here; he is a good-for-nothing, and is a great expense to us, because he does no work for the convent. But I hear the refectory bell.

Those who, like me, are at the head of a community, ought to be foremost in all its exercises." With that, the monk pushed me out, shut the door, and vanished from my sight as if he would have flown.

PARIS, the 21st of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXIV

RICA TO THE SAME

YESTERDAY I returned to the same library, and met a man very different from him whom I had seen the first time. His manner was simple, his countenance intelligent, and his address most courteous. As soon as he understood my desire, he set himself to satisfy it, and even, as I was a stranger, to instruct me.

"Good father," said I, "what are those large volumes which fill all that side of the library?" "These," said he, "are interpretations of the Scriptures." "What a quantity there are!" rejoined I; "the Scriptures must have been very obscure formerly, and cannot fail to be very obvious now. Do any doubts still remain? Are there any points left in dispute?" "Any, good heavens! any!" cried he; "there are almost as many as there are lines." "Indeed!" said I; "then what have all these authors done?" "These authors," he replied, "did not search the Scriptures for what ought to be believed, but for what they themselves believed; they did not regard the Scriptures as a work containing doctrines which they were bound to accept, but as a work which might sanction their own ideas; therefore it is that they have corrupted its meaning, and twisted every text. It is a country which all sects invade as if bent on pillage; it is a battlefield on which hostile nations encounter each other in endless engagements, attacking and skirmishing in every possible manner.

"Close to these you see books of asceticism and devotion; then books of morality, much more useful; theological tomes, doubly unintelligible, on account of the matter dis-

cussed, and the manner of treatment; and the works of the mystics, that is to say, of passionate-hearted devotees." "Ah, my father!" said I, "stay a moment; tell me about these mystics." "Sir," said he, "devotion warms a heart inclined to passion, and the heat mounting to the brain, produces ecstasies and raptures. This is the delirium of devotion; often it develops, or rather degenerates into quietism: you must know that a quietist is nothing else than a madman, a devotee, and a libertine, all in one.

"There are the casuists, who expose the secrets of the night; who form in their fancy all the monsters which the demon of love can produce, collect them, compare them, and make them the everlasting subject of their thoughts; happy are they, if their hearts do not take part in them, and if they themselves do not become accomplices in the many debaucheries they describe with such simplicity and directness!

"You see, sir, that I think freely, and tell you all I think. I am naturally artless, and more so with you who are a stranger, desirous of information, and to know things as they are. If I wished, I could speak of all this with admiration, and be for ever saying, 'It is divine, it is worthy of all reverence, it is truly marvelous!' And there would happen one of two things: either I would deceive you, or I would lower myself in your regard."

There we stopped; some business called away the dervish, and interrupted our conversation till the morrow.

PARIS, the 23d of the moon of
Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXV

RICA TO THE SAME

I RETURNED at the appointed time; and my friend led me to the very spot we had left. "Here," he said, "are the grammarians, the glossers, and the commentators." "Father," said I, "have not all these people been able to dispense with common sense?" "Yes," said he, "they

have; and yet it does not appear, and their works are not a penny the worse, which is very convenient for them." "True," said I; "and I know plenty of philosophers who would do well to occupy themselves with sciences of this kind."

"There," continued he, "are the orators who can convince people without employing reason; and the geometers, who compel a man to be convinced in spite of himself, and conquer him by sheer force.

"Here are metaphysical books, which deal with very lofty concerns indeed, and in which the infinite meets one at every turning; books of physics, which detect nothing more marvelous in the economy of the vast universe, than in the simplest machine of our craftsmen.

"Books of medicine, those monuments of the frailty of nature and of the power of art, which, when they treat even of the slightest disorders, make us tremble by bringing the idea of death home to us; but which, when they discuss the power of remedies, make us feel as secure as if we were immortal.

"Near these are the books of anatomy, which do not so much contain descriptions of the parts of the human body, as the barbarous names which have been given them — neither likely to cure the patient of his disease nor the physician of his ignorance.

"Here are the alchemists, who inhabit now the hospital, now the madhouse, dwellings equally suitable for them.

"Here are books of science, or rather of occult ignorance; of such are those which contain any kind of sorcery — execrable according to most people; in my opinion contemptible. Such also are the books of judicial astrology." "What do you say, father? The books of judicial astrology!" I cried with enthusiasm. "These are the books we make most of in Persia. They rule all the actions of our lives, and determine us in all our undertakings: in fact, the astrologers are our spiritual fathers, and more, for they take part in the government of the state." "If that is so," said he, "you live under a yoke much heavier than that of reason. Yours must be the strangest of all governments: I pity from my heart a family, and above all a nation,

which permits the planets to have such ascendancy over them." "We make use of astrology," replied I, "just as you make use of algebra. Every nation has its proper science, according to which it guides its policy. All the astrologers together have never committed so many follies in Persia, as a single algebraist has done here. Do you think that the fortuitous concourse of the stars is not as sure a guide as all the fine reasoning of your system-monger?* If the votes on that subject were counted in France and in Persia, astrology would have good reason to triumph; you would see the schemers properly humbled, from which how disastrous a corollary might be deduced against them!"

Our dispute was interrupted, and I had to leave him.

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of Rhamazan, 1719.

LETTER CXXXVI

RICA TO THE SAME

AT OUR next interview, my learned instructor took me into a separate room. "Here," said he, "are the books of modern history. First of all, there are the historians of the Church, and of the Popes; books which I read for instruction, but which often produce in me an opposite effect.

"There are the works of those who have written of the decline of the great Roman empire, which was formed from the ruins of so many monarchies, and from the destruction of which there sprang as many again. An infinite number of barbarous nations, as unknown as the countries which they inhabited, suddenly appeared, overran the Roman empire, ravaged it, cut it to pieces, and founded all the kingdoms which you now see in Europe. These races were not altogether barbarians, because they were free; but they became so afterward, as the most part of them, having submitted to absolute power, lost that sweet freedom, so conformable to reason, to humanity, and to nature.

* Law, the banker.

"There you see the historians of the German empire, which is but a shadow of the Roman one; but which is, I believe, the only power on earth unweakened by faction, and I believe also, the only one which grows stronger from its losses, and which, tardy in profiting by success, becomes invincible in defeat.

"Here are the historians of France, who show us to begin with the power of kings taking shape; then we see it perish twice, and reappear only to languish through many ages; but, insensibly gathering strength, and built up on all sides, it achieves its final stage: like those rivers which in their course lose their waters, or hide them under the earth; then reappearing again, swollen by the streams which flow into them, rapidly draw along with them all that opposes their passage.

"There you see the Spanish nation issuing from some mountains; the Mohammedan princes overcome as gradually as they had conquered quickly: many kingdoms joined in one vast monarchy, which became almost the only one; until, overborne by its own greatness and its fictitious wealth, it lost its strength and even its reputation, preserving only its original pride.

"These, again, are the historians of England. Here you may see liberty flaming up again and again from discord and sedition; the prince, always tottering upon an immovable throne; a nation impatient, but prudent in its rage; and which, mistress of the sea (a thing unheard of before), combines commerce with power.

"Near by are the historians of that other queen of the sea, the Republic of Holland, so respected in Europe, and so feared in Asia, where its merchants behold many a king bow to the dust before them.

"The historians of Italy show you a nation once mistress of the world, now the common slave; its princes disunited and weak, with no other attribute of sovereignty than an ineffectual policy.

"There are the historians of the republics: of Switzerland, which is the type of liberty; of Venice, resourceless but for its own thrift; and of Genoa, superb only because of its buildings.

"And here are those of the north — among others, of Poland, which makes such a bad use of its liberty and of the right it possesses of electing its kings, that it would seem to be its intention thereby to console its neighbors which have lost both the one and the other."

Thereupon we separated until next day.

PARIS, the 2d of the moon of Chalval, 1719.

LETTER CXXXVII

RICA TO THE SAME

NEXT morning he took me to another room. "Here," he said, "we have the poets; that is to say, those authors whose business it is to shackle common sense, and to smother reason with embellishment, as women were formerly buried under their ornaments and jewelry. You must know them; they are not uncommon in the east, where a hotter sun seems to give new heat even to the imagination." *

"There are the epic poems." "Ah! and what are epic poems?" "Indeed," said he, "I don't know; critics say that there were never more than two, and that the others, which go by the name, are not epics: that, too, I know nothing about. They say, besides, what is still more surprising, that it is impossible to make more.†

"Here are the dramatic poets, which are, in my opinion, the best of all, and the masters of passion. There are two kinds: the comic dramatists, who move us so agreeably, and the tragic dramatists, who rouse our passions and shake our dispositions.

* Like Pascal, Montesquieu despised poetry, although he liked plays. Voltaire, having been taken to task concerning his attacks on Montesquieu, replied, "He is guilty of *lèse-poésie*."

† M. Meyer, in his *Études de critique ancienne et moderne*, detects here an allusion to Voltaire's "Henriade," the beginning of which was already circulating in manuscript. This is not impossible, as Montesquieu had no great regard for Voltaire.

"And here are the lyric poets, whom I despise as much as I esteem the others, and who have reduced art to the production of melodious nonsense.

"Then come the authors of idylls and eclogues, which charm even courtiers, who imagine that they receive from them a feeling of serenity which they do not possess, and that they are brought face to face with the pastoral life.

"But of all the authors we have passed in review, here are the most dangerous: those, namely, who forge epigrams, little, sharp darts, which make a deep and incurable wound.

"Here you see the romances, whose authors are a sort of poets, and who are as extravagant in their wit as they are outrageous in their treatment of passion: they spend their lives seeking nature and never finding it: their heroes are about as natural as winged dragons and hippogriffs."

"I have seen," said I, "some of your romances, and if you could see ours, you would be yet more disgusted. They are as unnatural as yours, and, on account of our manners, excessively tedious; it takes ten years of devotion before a lover may be allowed as much as to see the face of his mistress. Yet the authors are compelled to conduct their readers through these wearisome preliminaries. As it is impossible that incidents should be endlessly varied, they have recourse to an artifice worse than the evil they would remedy; I mean the introduction of prodigies. I am sure you would not approve of a sorceress causing an army to spring out of the earth, or of a hero destroying single-handed a hundred thousand men. Yet such are our romances; the repetition of these dull adventures tires us out, and these absurd marvels disgust us."

PARIS, the 6th of the moon of
Chalval, 1719.

LETTER CXXXVIII

RICA TO IBBEN, AT SMYRNA

MINISTERS succeed and destroy each other here like the seasons; during three years I have seen the financial system change four times. To-day taxes are levied in Turkey and Persia, as they were levied by the founders of these empires; a state of affairs very different from that which exists here. It is true that we do not set about it so intelligently as the people of the west. We imagine that there is no more difference between the administration of the revenues of a prince and the fortune of a private person, than there is between counting a hundred thousand tomans and counting only a hundred; but the matter is very much more delicate and mysterious. It requires the greatest geniuses to work night and day, inventing endless new schemes with all the pains of travail; they must listen to the advice of a multitude of people, who, unasked, meddle in their affairs; they have to retire and live shut up in closets inaccessible to the great, and worshiped by the small; they must always have their heads full of important secrets, miraculous plans, and new systems; and, being absorbed in thought, it behooves them to be deprived of the use of speech, and sometimes even of the ability to be polite.

No sooner had the late king died, than they thought of setting up a new administration. They felt that things were in a bad way; but knew not how to bring about a better state. They did not believe in the unlimited authority of the preceding ministers; they wished the power to be divided. For that purpose five or six councils were created, and that ministry was perhaps the wisest of all those which have governed France; it did not last long, and neither did the good which it brought to pass.

France, at the death of the late king, was a body overcome by a thousand disorders: N———* took the knife

*The Duke of Noailles.

in hand, cut away the useless flesh, and applied some local remedies. But there always remained an internal disease. A stranger came who undertook its cure.* After many violent remedies, he imagined he had put it into good condition, whereas it had only become unhealthily stout.

All who were rich six months ago are now paupers, and those who lacked bread are rolling in wealth. These two extremities never before approached so near. This foreigner has turned the state as an old-clothes man turns a coat; he causes that to appear uppermost which was under, and that which was above he places beneath. What unexpected fortunes, incredible even to those who made them! God creates men out of nothing, with no greater expedition. How many valets are now waited on by their fellows, and may to-morrow be served by their former masters!

The oddest things happen as a result of all this. Lackeys, who made their fortune in the last reign, brag to-day of their birth: they avenge themselves upon those who have just doffed their livery in a certain street,† for all the contempt poured out upon themselves six months before; they cry with all their might, "The nobility is ruined! What a chaotic condition the state is in! What confusion of ranks! Only nameless people now make fortunes!" And these nameless ones, you may be sure, will take their revenge on those who come after them; in thirty years as people of quality they will make sufficient noise in the world.

PARIS, the 1st of the moon of Zilcade, 1720.

*John Law.

†Rue Quincampoix, at that time the rendezvous of stockbrokers.

LETTER CXXXIX

Rica to the Same

Here is an example of conjugal affection, wonderful in any woman, but much more so in a queen. The Queen of Sweden,* having quite made up her mind that the prince,† her husband, should share the government with her, in order to overcome all difficulties, sent to the Assembly a declaration resigning the regency, provided they elected him.

Some sixty years ago or more another queen, called Christina, abdicated the throne in order to devote herself entirely to philosophy. I know not which of these two examples one ought to admire most.

Although I entirely approve of every one maintaining himself firmly in the station in which nature has placed him, and although I cannot praise the weakness of those who, feeling themselves inferior to their position, leave it by what is little short of desertion, yet I am much struck with the magnanimity of these two princesses, which enabled the mind of the one and the heart of the other to rise superior to their fortunes. Christina aspired to knowledge at an age when others think only of enjoyment; and the other wished to enjoy her power only that she might place her entire happiness in the hands of her noble husband.

Paris, the 27th of the moon of
Maharram, 1720.

* Ulrica-Eleonora, sister of Charles XII., elected Queen of Sweden by the people.

† Frederic of Hesse-Cassel.

LETTER CXL

Rica to Usbek

The Parliament of Paris has just been banished to a little town called Pontoise.* The Council ordered it to register or approve a declaration dishonoring to it; and it registered it in a manner which dishonored the Council.

Other parliaments of the kingdom are threatened with similar treatment.

These assemblies are always detested; they approach kings only to tell them disagreeable truths, and while a crowd of courtiers are never done representing to them that the people are quite happy under their rule, the parliaments come giving the lie to flattery, and carrying to the foot of the throne the tearful complaints committed to them.

When it is necessary to bear it into the presence of princes, truth, my dear Usbek, is a heavy burden! It ought therefore to be remembered that those who do so are constrained to it, and that they never would have made up their minds to a course so disagreeable and distressing for those who undertake it, if they were not compelled by their duty, their respect, and even by their affection.

Paris, the 21st of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1720.

LETTER CXLI

Rica to the Same, at * * *

I will visit you at the end of the week. How pleasantly the time will pass in your company!

Some days ago, I was presented to a lady of the court who had taken a fancy to see my foreign figure. I found her beautiful, deserving the affection of our monarch,

*The Parliament, having opposed Law's system, was exiled to Pontoise by the Regent on the 21st of July, 1720.

and a high rank in the sacred place where his heart reposes.

She asked me a thousand questions about the customs of the Persians, and the style of life led by the Persian women. The life of the seraglio did not appear to her taste, and she displayed repugnance at the idea of one man being shared among ten or a dozen women. She could not think of the man's happiness without envy, nor of the condition of the women without compassion. As she loved reading, above all the works of the poets and romance writers, she desired me to talk to her of ours. What I told her redoubled her curiosity; she begged me to translate for her a portion of one of those which I have with me. I did so, and sent to her, some days after, a Persian tale. Perhaps you will be amused to see it in my translation.

In the time of Sheik Ali-Khan, there lived in Persia a woman called Zulema; she knew the whole of the sacred Koran by heart; not a dervish among them understood better than she the traditions of the holy prophets; the Arab scholars never said anything so mysterious that she could not comprehend all its meaning; and she united to all this learning a cast of mind so sprightly, that those who heard her talk could hardly make out whether she meant to amuse or to instruct them.

Once, while she was with her companions in a room of the seraglio, one of them asked her what she thought of the next life; and if she held to that ancient tradition of our doctors which declares that Paradise was made for men alone.

"It is the general opinion," she said; "nothing has been left undone to degrade our sex. There is even a race scattered throughout Persia, called the Jews, who maintain, by the authority of their sacred writings, that we have no souls.

"These most insulting opinions have no other origin than the vanity of men, who wish to carry their superiority even beyond this life, forgetting that at the last day all creatures will appear before God as nothing, and that no one will have any advantage over another except that which virtue gives.

"God will be impartial in His rewards: and as those men who have led a good life, and have made a good use of the power which they have over us here below, will be sent to a paradise full of beauties so celestial and ravishing, that were a mortal to see them, he would at once kill himself in his impatience to enjoy them; so virtuous women will enter into a delightful abode, where they will be surfeited with a torrent of pleasure in the arms of god-like men who will be at their beck: each of them will have a seraglio in which these men will be sequestrated, with eunuchs, even more faithful than ours, to guard them.

"I have read," she continued, "in an Arab book, of a man called Ibrahim, who was insufferably jealous. He had twelve exceedingly beautiful wives, to whom he behaved in a most barbarous fashion; he had no faith in his eunuchs, nor in the walls of his seraglio; he kept them almost always under lock and key, shut up in their rooms, and unable to see, or speak to, each other; for he was jealous even of an innocent friendship: all his actions were colored by his brutal nature: a soft word was never heard to issue from his mouth; and he never gave them the slightest attention, except to add something to the severity of their slavery.

"One day when he had them all gathered together in an apartment of his seraglio, one, bolder than the rest, reproached him with his morose disposition. 'When one takes such strong measures to make himself feared,' she said, 'he always finds that he makes himself hated instead. We are so miserable that we cannot help wishing a change: others, in my place, would desire your death; I only desire my own; and as I can only hope to be separated from you by death, it will be all the sweeter on that account.' This speech, which should have softened him, sent him off into a paroxysm of anger; he drew his dagger and plunged it into her breast. 'My dear companions,' said she, with her dying breath, 'if Heaven has compassion on my virtue, you will be avenged.' With these words, she quitted this miserable life, and entered into the abode of bliss, where women who have followed virtue, enjoy a happiness which never palls.

"At first she saw a pleasant meadow whose greenery was relieved with enamel of the brightest flowers: a river, the waters of which were purer than crystal, rolled through it in a labyrinth of meanders. Then she entered a delightful wood, where the silence was broken only by the sweet songs of birds. Splendid gardens next opened on her view; on these nature had bestowed her simple charm as well as all her magnificence. At last she came to a glorious palace prepared for her, and filled with heavenly men destined for her delight.

"Two of them advanced to her at once and undressed her: others led her to the bath, and perfumed her with the sweetest essences: then they gave her garments infinitely richer than her old ones: after which they led her into a spacious apartment, where was a fire made of odorous woods, and a table spread with a most exquisite repast. All things seemed to unite to ravish every sense: she heard on one side a strain of lofty music, all the more so as it throbbed with passion; on the other, she beheld the dances of these godlike men, exclusively devoted to her pleasure. Yet all these pleasures were only intended to lead her by degrees to pleasures yet more entrancing. They conducted her to her chamber; and, having been again undressed, she was laid in a sumptuous bed, where two men of exquisite beauty received her in their arms. Then was she in an ecstasy of delight; her raptures exceeded even her desires. 'I am transported,' she said; 'I should think myself dying, were I not certain that I am immortal. It is too much; release me; I am overcome by excess of pleasure. Ah! you restore a little tranquillity to my senses; I breathe again; I return to myself. Why have the lights been taken away? Why can I not still contemplate your godlike beauty? Why, can I not see . . . But, what do I talk of seeing? You make me glide once more into my former transports. Sweet heavens! how soothing is this darkness! What! I shall be immortal; and immortal with you! I shall be . . . No; respite a moment; for I see that you are not likely to ask it.'

"After reiterated commands she was obeyed: but not until she seemed to wish it in good earnest. Drooping, she gave

herself to repose, and slumbered in their arms. Two moments of sleep restored her strength, and she received two kisses which not only wakened her, but reawakened her passions. 'I am uneasy,' she said; 'I doubt you love me no longer.' It was a doubt in which she had no desire to remain long, and she soon had from them explanations as complete as she could desire. 'I see my mistake,' she cried; 'pardon me, pardon me, I will never doubt you again. You say nothing; but your actions prove it better than anything you could say; yes, yes, I own it; no one was ever loved so much. But, what is this! you contest which shall have the honor of convincing me! Ah! if you vie with each other, if you join ambition to the pleasure of defeating me, I am lost; you will both be conquerors, and I, only, vanquished; but I will make you pay for your victory.'

"Day alone put an end to these delights. Her faithful and attached servants entered her chamber and caused the two young men to rise; they were reconducted by two old men to the rooms where they were kept for her pleasure. She then rose, and appeared before her devoted court, first in the charms of a simple undress, and afterward appareled in the most costly attire. The past night had increased her beauty; it had given greater brilliance to her complexion, and a new attraction to her charms. The entire day was spent in dances, concerts, feasts, games, and promenades; and it was noticed that Anais withdrew from time to time, and fled to her two young heroes: after some precious moments with them, she returned to the company which she had left, the expression of her face growing more and more serene. At last, toward evening, they lost sight of her altogether: she had gone to shut herself up in her seraglio, where she wished, she said, to make the acquaintance of those immortal captives who were to live with her forever. She therefore visited those apartments, the most retired and the most delightful, where she counted fifty slaves, miracles of manly beauty; all night she went from room to room, receiving everywhere homage ever new, and ever the same.

"Thus the immortal Anais passed her life, now in the midst of glittering throngs, now in solitary delight;

admired by a brilliant company, or adored by a single ardent lover: often she would quit an enchanted palace, to pass into a rural grotto: flowers seemed to spring up at her tread, and pleasures crowded round her.

"During more than eight days she spent her time in that happy mansion, always transported, and without ever passing a thought: she had enjoyed her happiness without knowing it, and without having had a single moment of that mental repose, in which the soul, if I may say so, takes account of itself, and listens to its own discourse in the silence of the passions.

"The pleasures of the blessed are so engrossing, that they seldom enjoy this freedom of spirit: therefore it is that, being invincibly attached to present objects, they lose altogether the memory of things past, and have no longer any thought for that which they had known or loved in the other life.

"But Anais, whose spirit was truly philosophical, had passed almost all her life in meditation: she had pushed her thought much further than one would have expected from a woman left to herself. The severe seclusion in which her husband had kept her, had left her no other enjoyment.

"It was this strength of mind which had enabled her to despise the terror that had paralyzed her companions, and death, which was to be the end of her troubles and the beginning of her felicity.

"And so she recovered by degrees from the intoxication of pleasure, and shut herself up alone in a room of her palace. She gave the rein to pleasing reflection on her past condition and her present happiness; she could not help pitying the wretched lot of her companions: one can always sympathize with the miseries which one has shared. Anais did not confine herself, however, to compassion: so kindly disposed was she toward these unfortnate women, that she was constrained to aid them.

"She ordered one of the young men who were with her to assume the figure of her husband, go to his seraglio, master it, drive him out, and occupy his place until she recalled him.

"The execution was prompt: he cut through the air, and arrived at the door of the seraglio of Ibrahim, who happened to be away. He knocked; every door flew open; the eunuchs fell at his feet. He flew toward the apartments where the wives of Ibrahim were shut up. He had in passing snatched the keys from the pocket of that jealous monster, to whom he had made himself invisible. He entered, and surprised the women first by his gentle and agreeable manner; and much more shortly after by the assiduity and the alacrity with which he embraced them. All were given cause to be astonished; and they would have taken it for a dream had there been less of reality about it.

"While these novel incidents were passing in the seraglio, Ibrahim thundered at the door, announced himself, and stormed and shouted. After having overcome many obstacles, he entered, to the great consternation of the eunuchs. He strode on, but recoiled like one dropped from the clouds when he saw the false Ibrahim, his perfect image, exercising all the liberties of a master. He called for help, and bade the eunuchs aid him to kill this impostor: but he was not obeyed. Only one weak resource remained to him; and that was, to refer the matter to the judgment of his wives. In a single hour the false Ibrahim had corrupted all his judges. He was driven away, and dragged ignominiously out of the seraglio; and he would have been killed a thousand times, if his rival had not ordered that his life should be spared. Lastly, the new Ibrahim, remaining master of the field, proved himself more and more a worthy choice, and distinguished himself by feats before unknown. 'You are not like Ibrahim,' said the women. 'Say rather that that impostor is not like me,' replied the triumphant Ibrahim. 'How could any one deserve to be your husband, if what I do is insufficient.'

"'Ah! we shall be careful how we doubt,' said the women: 'if you are not Ibrahim, it is enough for us that you have so well deserved to be him: you are more Ibrahim, in one day, than he was in the course of ten years.' 'You promise me, then,' replied he, 'that you will declare in my favor against this impostor?' 'Never doubt it,' cried they with one voice: 'we swear to be forever faith-

ful to you: we have been deceived quite long enough: the coward did not suspect our virtue, he suspected only his own impotence: we see clearly that men are not all made like him; it is you without doubt whom they resemble: if you only knew how much you make us hate him!' 'Ah! I will often give you new occasions for hatred,' replied the false Ibrahim; 'you do not yet know how great a wrong he has done you.' 'We judge of his iniquity by the greatness of your revenge,' they replied. 'Yes, you are right,' said the godlike man; 'I have proportioned the punishment to the crime; and I am very glad that you are satisfied with my method of punishment.' 'But,' said these women, 'should this impostor return, what shall we do?' 'It would be, I believe, difficult for him to deceive you,' replied he: 'in the relation in which I stand to you, one could hardly maintain himself by trickery: and besides, I will send him so far away that you will hear no more of him. Thereafter I shall take upon myself the care of your happiness. I will not be jealous; I know how to bind you to me without restraining you; I have a sufficiently good opinion of my own deserts to believe that you will be faithful to me; if not with me, with whom would you be virtuous?' This conversation lasted a long time between him and these women; the latter, more struck by the difference between the two Ibrahims than by their resemblance, were not specially desirous to have the mystery cleared up. At last, the desperate husband returned again to annoy them: he found his whole household rejoicing, and his wives more incredulous than ever. It was no place for a jealous man; he went away mad with rage: and the moment after, the false Ibrahim followed him, seized him, carried him through the air to a distance of two thousand leagues, and there dropped him.

"Ye gods, in what a wretched plight did these women find themselves during the absence of their dear Ibrahim! Already their eunuchs had resumed their accustomed severity; the whole household was in tears; sometimes they imagined that all that had happened was no more than a dream; they looked wistfully on each other, and recalled the slightest circumstances of these wonderful adventures.

At last the heavenly Ibrahim returned more amiable than ever; it was evident to them that his journey had not put him about. The new master took a course so opposite to that of the other, that all his neighbors were amazed. He dismissed all the eunuchs, and opened his house to everybody: he would not even allow his wives to wear their veils. It was a most extraordinary thing to see them, feasting along with the men, and as free as they. Ibrahim believed, and rightly, that the customs of the country were not made for such citizens as he. Nevertheless, he spared no expense: he squandered with a lavish hand the possessions of the jealous husband, who, on his return three years after from the distant land to which he had been transported, found nothing left but his wives and thirty-six children."

PARIS, the 26th of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1720.

LETTER CXLII

RICA TO USBEK, AT * * *

HERE is a letter which I received yesterday from a learned man: you will think it remarkable.

"SIR,—Six months ago I inherited from a very rich uncle five or six thousand livres and a magnificently furnished mansion. It is delightful to have wealth, when one knows how to make a good use of it. I have no ambition, nor any taste for pleasure: I am almost always shut up in a little room, where I lead the life of a savant. It is in such a place that the diligent antiquary is to be found.

"When my uncle died, I was very anxious to have him buried with the ceremonies observed by the ancient Greeks and Romans: but at that time I had neither lachrymatories, nor urns, nor antique lamps.

"Since then, however, I have provided myself with these precious rarities. Some days ago I sold my silver plate in order to buy an earthenware lamp which had given light to

a Stoic philosopher. I have disposed of all the glass with which my uncle had covered almost all the walls of his rooms, that I might possess a little mirror, somewhat cracked, which had formerly been used by Virgil: it charms me to see my own features where those of the swan of Mantua have been reflected. That is not all: I have bought for a hundred louis d'or five or six pieces of copper money which were current two thousand years ago. I do not think I have now in my house a single piece of furniture which was not made before the fall of the Roman empire. I have a cupboard full of the most valuable and costly manuscripts. Although it is ruining my sight, I much prefer to read them than printed copies which are not so correct, and which are in everybody's hands. Although I hardly ever go out, that does not prevent me from having an ungovernable passion to be acquainted with all the old roads which date from the time of the Romans. There is one near my house which was made by a proconsul of Gaul about twelve hundred years ago. When I go to my place in the country, I never fail to take it, although it is very inconvenient, and leads me more than a league out of my way: but what really angers me are the wooden posts stuck up at certain intervals to indicate the distances of the neighboring towns. I am in despair at the sight of these signposts, wretched substitutes for the military columns that stood there formerly: I have no doubt that I shall cause them to be set up again by my heirs, and that I shall be able to leave a will compelling them to do it. If, sir, you have such a thing as a Persian manuscript, you would oblige me very much by letting me have it: I will pay you your own price, and will give you into the bargain some works of mine, from which you will see that I am not a useless member of the republic of letters. Among them you will notice a dissertation in which I prove that the crown used formerly in triumphs, was of oak and not of laurel: you will admire another in which I show clearly, by learned conjectures deduced from the weightiest Greek authors, that Cambyses was wounded, not in the right leg, but in the left; in another I demonstrate that a low forehead was a beauty much in request among the Romans. I will send you also a quarto

volume, containing the explanation of a line in the sixth book of Virgil's "Æneid." All these things you will receive in a few days; and in the meantime I content myself with sending you the accompanying fragment of an ancient Greek mythologist, which has not yet been published, and which I discovered in the dust of a library. I must leave you now for an important matter which I have in hand, namely, the restoration of a beautiful passage in Pliny the naturalist, which has been strangely disfigured by the copyists of the fifth century. I am," etc.

Fragment of an Ancient Mythologist

"In an island near the Oscades, a child was born whose father was Æolus, the god of the winds, and his mother a nymph of Caledonia.* They tell of him that he learned unaided to count with his fingers; and that from his fourth year he distinguished metals so well, that his mother, having given him a ring of tin in exchange for one of gold, he perceived the deceit, and threw it away.

"When he had grown up, his father taught him the secret of inclosing the winds in skins, which he afterward sold to all the travelers: but as the trade in winds was not very brisk in his country, he left it, and went up and down the world, accompanied by the blind god of chance.

"During his travels he learned that gold glittered in every part of Betica;† and he hurried thither at once. He was very badly received by Saturn,‡ who reigned then: but that god having quitted the earth, he judged it wise to go into all the crossroads and cry continually in a hoarse voice, 'People of Betica, you think yourselves rich, because you have silver and gold! I pity your error. Be ruled by me: leave the land of the base metals; come into the empire of the imagination, and I promise you riches which will astonish even you.' He immediately opened a great number of the skins which he had brought with him, and dealt out his merchandise to all who wished it.

*The Scotch financier, Law, of whose system this allegory is a satire.

† France. ‡ Louis XIV.

"Next morning he returned to the same crossroads, and cried, 'People of Betica, would you be rich? Imagine that I am very rich, and that you are very rich: get yourselves into the belief every morning that your fortune has been doubled during the night: rise, then, and if you have any creditors, go and pay them with what you have imagined, and tell them to imagine in their turn.'

"A few days after he appeared again, and spoke as follows: 'People of Betica, I perceive that your imagination is weaker than it was a day or two ago; try to bring it up to the strength of mine: I will place before you every morning a bill, which will be the source of wealth for you: you will see only four words,* but they will be of the highest significance, as they will settle the portions of your wives, the fortunes of your children, and the number of your domestics. And, as for you'—addressing those of the crowd who were nearest him—'as for you, my dear children (I may call you by that name, since you have received from me a second birth), my bill shall decide as to the magnificence of your equipages, the splendor of your feasts, and the number and pensions of your mistresses.'

"Some days later he came into the street, quite out of breath, and cried out in a violent passion, 'People of Betica, I counseled you to imagine, but you have not done so: well then, I now command you to imagine.' With that he left them abruptly; but on second thoughts retraced his steps. 'I understand that some of you are odious enough to keep your gold and silver. For the silver, let it go: but the gold . . . the gold . . . Ah! that stirs my anger! . . . I swear, by my sacred windbags, that if you do not bring it to me, I will inflict dire punishment upon you.'† Then he added, in the most seductive manner imaginable, 'Do you think it is to keep these wretched metals that I ask them from you? A proof of my good faith is, that when you brought me them some days ago, I gave you back at once one half.'‡

* *Le cours des actions*, the price of shares.

† It had been decreed that all specie should be taken to the Bank.

‡ At the beginning of Law's "system," claims on the Bank were paid half in paper and half in cash.

"Next day, he kept at some distance, and endeavored with soft and flattering voice to worm himself into their favor. 'People of Betica, I learn that a portion of your wealth is in foreign countries: I beg you to have it sent to me;* it will oblige me very much, and I will never forget your kindness.'

"The son of Æolus was addressing people who were in no mood to be amused, yet they could not restrain their laughter; which caused him to slink away in a shame-faced manner. But, his courage having returned, he risked another little petition. 'I know that you have precious stones; in the name of Jupiter, get rid of them; nothing will so impoverish you as things of that kind; get rid of them, I tell you.† Should you be unable to do so yourselves, I can provide excellent agents. What wealth will pour in upon you, if you follow my advice! Yes, I promise you the very best my windbags contain.'

"Then he got up on a platform, and, in a more resolute tone, said, 'People of Betica, I have compared the happy condition in which you now are with that in which I found you when I first came here; I behold you the richest people in the world: but, in order to crown your good fortune, allow me to deprive you of the half of your wealth.' With these words, the son of Æolus soared away on rapid wings, and left his audience dumb with amazement, a result which brought him back next day, when he spoke as follows: 'I perceived yesterday that my speech displeased you very much. Very well! suppose that I have said nothing at all as yet. It is quite true; one half is too much. We must find some other expedient to arrive at the result which I have proposed. Let us gather all our wealth into one place; we can do so easily, because it does not occupy much space.' Immediately three-quarters of their wealth had disappeared." ‡

PARIS, the 9th of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

* A royal order, issued 20th of June, 1720.
† A decree of the 4th of July, 1720.
‡ A decree of the 15th of September, 1720.

LETTER CXLIII

Rica to Nathaniel Levi, Jewish Physician at Leghorn

You ask me what I think of the virtues of amulets, and the power of talismans. Why do you address yourself to me? You are a Jew and I am a Mohammedan, that is to say, two very superstitious people.

I carry about with me always two thousand passages from the holy Koran: on my arms I fasten a little slip on which are written the names of more than two hundred dervishes: the names of Hali, of Fatima, and of all the saintliest ones, are hidden in my clothes in more than twenty places.

However, I do not disapprove of those who refuse to believe in the power ascribed to certain words. We find it more difficult to reply to their arguments, than they to our experience. I carry about me all these sacred scraps through long habit, and in order to conform to a universal practice: I am certain that if they do not possess more virtue than the rings and other ornaments with which we deck ourselves, they have at least as much. You, on the other hand, place your entire confidence in some mysterious letters; and without that safeguard would be in perpetual dread.

Men are most unfortunate beings. They hover constantly between false hopes and ridiculous fears: and instead of relying on reason, make themselves monsters to terrify them, or phantoms to mislead them.

What effect do you think can be produced by an arrangement of certain letters? What evil effect can their derangement produce? What connection have they with the winds that they should calm tempests; with gunpowder, that they should overcome its force; with peccant humors, as doctors call them, and the morbific cause of diseases, that they should cure them?

What is most extraordinary is, that those who tire out their minds endeavoring to show the connection between certain events and occult powers, are forced to take as much trouble again to keep themselves from perceiving the true cause.

You will tell me that a battle was gained by means of certain spells; whereas I hold that you must be blind, not to see that the situation of the field, the number or courage of the soldiers, the experience of the captains, are sufficient to produce that effect, of which you willfully ignore the true cause.

I will grant for a moment that spells may exist: grant in your turn, for a moment, that they may not; which is far from impossible. What you grant me will not prevent two armies from encountering each other in battle: would you hold in that case that neither could defeat the other?

Do you believe that the battle will remain dubious until an invisible power comes to decide it? that every blow will be thrown away; all strategy in vain; and all courage useless?

Do you imagine that death, present on such occasions in a thousand forms, cannot produce in the minds of men those wild panics which you have such difficulty in explaining? Will you have it that in an army of a hundred thousand men there may not be a single coward? Do you think that the discouragement of such a one may not produce discouragement in another? that the second influencing a third, would soon make him produce a like effect upon a fourth? No more would be necessary to cause a whole army to be suddenly seized with despair, and the larger the army, the more sudden the seizure.

The whole world knows and feels that men, like all creatures actuated by self-preservation, are passionately attached to life: this is known to be the general rule; and yet people ask why on a particular occasion, they should fear to lose it.

Although the holy writings of all nations abound with accounts of these wild and supernatural panics, I can imagine nothing more ridiculous; because, to be certain that an effect which may be produced in a hundred thousand natural ways is supernatural, would require first of all

proof positive that none of these causes had operated; which is impossible.

But I shall say no more about it, Nathaniel; it seems to me that it is not a subject deserving such serious treatment.

PARIS, the 20th of the moon of Chahban, 1720.

P. S.—As I was concluding, I heard them crying in the streets a letter from a country physician to one in Paris (for here every trifle is printed, published, and bought). I believe it is worth while sending it to you because it has some bearing on our subject.

LETTER FROM A COUNTRY PHYSICIAN TO A PHYSICIAN OF PARIS

"There was once in our town a sick person who had had no sleep for thirty-five days. His physician ordered him opium; but he could not make up his mind to take it, and when he had the cup in his hand he was less inclined than ever. At last, he said to his physician, 'Sir, give me only till to-morrow: I know a man who, although he does not practice medicine, has in his house an immense number of cures for insomnia; let me send for him: and if I do not sleep to-night, I promise to return to you.' The physician being dismissed, the sick man had his curtains closed, and said to his page, 'Go to M. Anis and ask him to come to me.' When M. Anis came the patient said to him, 'My dear sir, I am dying; I can't sleep: have you not in your shop the C. of the G.,* or some other book of devotion written by an R. P. J.,† which you have not been able to sell, for long-kept remedies are often the best?' 'Sir,' replied the bookseller, 'I have the "Holy Court" of Father Caussin,‡ in six volumes, at your serv-

* *La Connaissance du Globe*, according to the early editors.

† *Révérend père Jésuite.*

‡ A Jesuit, born at Troyes. He was the confessor of Louis XIII., and was exiled by Richelieu.

ice; I will send it to you; and I hope you will be the better of it. If you would prefer the works of the reverend Father Rodrigo, a Spanish Jesuit, you need not want them. But, believe me, you had better stick to Father Caussin; I trust, with the help of God, that a single sentence of Father Caussin's will do you more good than a whole page of the C. of the G.' With that M. Anis left, and went to his shop to get the remedy. The 'Holy Court' arrived; and the dust having been shaken off it, the son of the sick man, a schoolboy, began to read it: he was the first to feel its effects; at the second page his utterance began to be almost inarticulate, and already the whole company was growing drowsy; in a moment, everybody was snoring except the sick man, who, after having stood it a good while, was at last overcome, too.

"The physician arrived early next morning. 'Well,' he said, 'has my opiate been taken?' Nobody answered him: the sick man's wife, daughter, and little boy, radiant with joy, showed him Father Caussin. He asked what it was. They answered, 'Long life to Father Caussin; we must send him to be bound. Who would have said it? Who would have thought it? It is a miracle. Look, sir, look! here is Father Caussin; it is this book which has given my father sleep.' And thereupon they explained the matter to him as it had happened.

"The physician was a skillful man, versed in the mysteries of the Cabala, and in the power of words and spirits. He was much struck, and, after deep thought, resolved to change his practice entirely. 'Here is indeed a notable fact!' said he. 'It is a new experience; and I must experiment further. And why should a spirit not be able to transmit to its work the same qualities which itself possesses? Do we not see it every day? At least it is well worth the trying. I am tired of the apothecaries; their syrups, their juleps, and all their galenical drugs destroy the health and the lives of their patients. Let us change the method, and try the power of the spirits.' With this idea, he drafted a new system of pharmacy, as you will see by the description which I am about to give you of the principal remedies which he employed.

"A Light Purgative

"Take three leaves of Aristotle's logic in Greek; two leaves of a treatise on scholastic theology, the keener the better, as, for example, that of the subtle Scotus; four of Paracelsus; one of Avicenna; six of Averroes; three of Porphyry; as many of Plotinus, and as many of Jamblicus. Infuse the whole for twenty-four hours, and take four doses a day.

"A Stronger Purgative

"Take ten A——— of the C———, concerning the B——— and the C——— of the I———;* distil them in a water-bath; dilute a drop of the bitter and pungent product in a glass of common water; swallow the whole with confidence.

"An Emetic

"Take six harangues; any dozen funeral orations, carefully excepting those of M. of N.;† a collection of new operas; fifty novels; thirty new memoirs. Put the whole in a large flask; leave it to settle for two days; then distil it on a sand-bath. And if all this should be insufficient, here is,

"Another More Powerful Emetic

"Take a leaf of marbled paper which has served as cover to a collection of the pieces of the J. F.;‡ infuse it for three minutes; warm a spoonful of the infusion, and drink it off.

"A Very Simple Cure for Asthma

"Read all the works of the reverend Father Maimbourg,§ formerly a Jesuit, taking care to pause only at the end of

*Ten Decrees (Arrêts) of the Council, concerning the Bank and the Company of the Indies; or, according to the earlier editors, concerning the Bull and the Constitution of the Jesuits.

† Fléchier, Bishop of Nimes (*Monsieur de Nimes*).

‡ The *Jeux Floraux*, established in 1324 by the magistrates of Toulouse to revive the decaying art of the troubadours.

§ Louis Maimbourg, expelled from the Company of Jesus in 1685 for having defended the liberties of the Gallican Church in his *Traité historique de l'Église de Rome.*

each sentence; and you will gradually find your power of breathing return to you so completely, that you will have no need to repeat the cure.

"An Antidote for the Itch, Rashes, Scaldhead, and Farcy

"Take three of Aristotle's categories, two metaphysical degrees, one distinction, six lines of Chapelain, one phrase from the letters of the Abbé of Saint-Cyran; write them all on a piece of paper, fold it up, tie it to a ribbon, and carry it round your neck.

Miraculum chymicum, de violenta fermentatione, cum fumo, igne, et flamma

"*Misce Quesnellianam infusionem, cum infusione Lallemanianâ; fiat fermentatio cum magna vi, impetu et tonitru, acidio pugnantibus, et invicem penetrantibus alcalinos sales; fiet evaporatio ardentium spiritium. Pone liquorem fermentatum in alembico; nihil inde extrahes, et nihil invenies, nisi caput mortuum.*

"*Lenitivum*

"*Recipe Molinæ anodine chartas duas; Escobaris relaxativi paginas sex; Vasquii emollientis folium unum; infunde in aquæ communis lib. iiij. Ad consumptionem dimidiæ partis colentur et exprimantur; et, in expressione, dissolve Bauni detersivi et Tamburini abluentis folia iij.*

"*Fiat clister.*

"*In chlorosim quam vulgus pallidos-colores, aut febrim amatoriam appellat*

"*Recipe Aretini figuras iiij.; R. Thomæ Sanchii de matrimonis folia ij.*

"*Infuditur in aquæ communis libras quinque.*

"*Fiat ptisana aperiens.**

* "A marvel in chemistry, concerning a violent fermentation, accompanied with smoke, heat, and flame. Mingle an infusion of

"These are the drugs which our physician prescribed with remarkable success. 'He did not wish,' he said, 'lest he should kill his patients, to employ rare remedies, and such as are difficult to find — for example, a dedicatory epistle which had never made anybody yawn; too short a preface; a bishop's charge written by himself; and the work of a Jansenist despised by a Jansenist, or else admired by a Jesuit.' He held that remedies of that kind were only fit to maintain quackery, to which he had an insurmountable antipathy."

Quesnel* with one of Lallemand;† let fermentation proceed with much violence, energy, and noise, as the acids fight together, and eat their way into each other's alkaline salts;‡ the fiery spirits will thus evaporate. When fermentation is over, put the liquid in an alembic: you will get nothing out of it, and find nothing left in it, but a *caput mortuum*.— A Gentle Aperient. Take two papers of Molina as pain-killer; of Escobar, to keep the bowels open, take six pages; take of Vasquez, to keep the passage easy, one leaf; infuse in four pounds of common water. When half has evaporated, strain and squeeze; and while squeezing, dissolve in the mixture three leaves of Bauni to act as detergent, and three of Tamburini ⁋ to wash away impurities. Make a clyster of the result.— A cure for chlorosis, vulgarly called the green-sickness, or hot fit of love. Take four plates from Aretinus; take of Thomas Sanchez' work on "Marriage," two leaves. Infuse them in five pounds of common water, and you will have a pleasant aperient."

*A Jansenist, and great opponent of the Jesuits.

†A Jesuit father.

‡A pun in the original; "sales" meaning also "witticisms."

⁋Molina, Escobar, Vasquez, Bauni, and Tamburini were Jesuits who replied to the attacks of the Jansenists. Their names are frequently mentioned in Pascal's "Provincials." The name of Escobar makes at least one appearance in English literature:

> "Now they prick pins at a tissue
> Fine as a skein of the casuist Escobar's
> Worked on the bone of a lie."
>
> —BROWNING'S "Master Hugues of Saxe-Gotha."

LETTER CXLIV*

Usbek to Rica

Some days ago I met in a country-house which I was visiting, two learned men who have a great reputation here. Their characters astonished me. The conversation of the first, justly estimated, reduced itself to this: "What I have said is true, because I have said it." The conversation of the second went the other way about: "What I have not said is not true, because I have not said it."

I liked the first pretty well; for it is not of the least consequence to me, however stiff in opinion a man may be; but I cannot endure impertinence. The first defends his opinions: that is to say, his own property; the second attacks the opinions of others; that is to say, the property of the whole world.

Oh, my dear Rica,† how badly vanity serves those who have a larger share of it than is necessary for self-preservation! Such people wish to be admired by dint of offending. They wish to be superior, but they do not even attain to mediocrity.

Come hither to me, modest men, that I may embrace you! You are the charm, the delight of life. You think that you are nobodies; but I tell you that you possess the one thing needful. You think that no one is humiliated by you, and you humiliate the whole world. And when I compare you in my mind with those imperious people whom I see everywhere, I drag them from their judgment seat, and throw them at your feet.

Paris, the 22d of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

* The seventh letter added in 1754.

† In the original "my dear Usbek," which is evidently a mistake.

LETTER CXLV*

USBEK TO * * *

A MAN of genius is usually fastidious in society. He chooses few acquaintances; he finds the vast majority of people whom he is pleased to call bad company very tedious; and as he cannot altogether hide his disgust, he makes many enemies.

Sure of pleasing when he likes, he very often does not like.

He is much given to criticism, because he sees and feels more than others.

He almost always ruins his fortune, because his genius supplies him with a great variety of means for that purpose.

He fails in his undertakings because he attempts too much. His vision, which carries far, causes him to have in view objects which are too remote. It must also be remembered that, in projecting a scheme, he is less impressed by the difficulties which spring from it, than by the means of overcoming them, which he derives from his own resources.

He neglects minor details, although upon them the success of almost all great enterprises depends.

The mediocre man, on the other hand, tries to make use of everything, he is so well aware that he cannot afford to neglect trifles.

Universal approbation is very generally accorded to the mediocre man. Every one is delighted to give the latter praise, and enchanted to withhold it from the former. While envy expends itself on the one and nothing is forgiven him, everything is construed in the other's favor; vanity declares itself on his side.

But if so many disadvantages burden the man of genius, what is to be said of the hard lot of a scientific man?

I never think of it without recalling a letter written by a savant to one of his friends. Here it is: —

"SIR, — I am a man whose nights are spent in studying through telescopes thirty feet long those great bodies which

*The eighth letter added in 1754.

roll over our heads; and when I wish for relaxation, I take my little microscopes and examine a maggot or a mite.

"I am not rich, and I have only one room; I dare not even light a fire in it, because the unnatural warmth would cause the mercury to rise in my thermometer. Last winter, I thought I would die of cold; and although my thermometer, which was at the lowest, told me that my hands were freezing, I did not put myself about. And I have the consolation of knowing exactly the slightest changes in the weather for the whole of the past year.

"I have little intercourse with others; and among all the people whom I meet, I know no one. But there is a man at Stockholm, another at Leipsic and another at London, whom I have never seen, and whom I shall doubtless never see, but with whom I keep up a correspondence so punctual, that I do not miss a single post.

"But although I know no one in my neighborhood, my reputation here is so bad, that I shall sooner or later require to leave it. Five years ago I was grossly insulted by a woman for having dissected a dog which she pretended belonged to her. The wife of a butcher, who happened to be present, took her side. And, while the one abused me heartily, the other pelted me with stones, along with Dr. ———, who was in my company, and who received such dreadful blows on the head, both back and front, that his mind was much shaken.

"Since that time, whenever a dog strays away from the street corner, it is at once taken for granted that he has passed through my hands. A decent citizen's wife, who had lost her pet dog, which she said she loved better than her children, came the other day and fainted in my room; not finding her dog, she summoned me before the magistrate. I believe I shall never be delivered from the persistent malice of these women, who, in shrieking tones, din me daily with the funeral oration of all the beasts that have died during the last six years. I am," etc.

All scientific men were formerly accused of magic. I am not surprised at it. Each one said to himself, "I have carried human capacity as far as it can go; and yet a cer-

tain savant has distanced me : beyond a doubt he deals in sorcery."

Now that accusations of that kind have been discredited, another course has been taken ; and the scientific man can hardly escape the reproach of ungodliness or of heresy. It is of little consequence that the people hold him innocent : the wound once made can never be quite closed again. It will always be a tender spot. An opponent will come thirty years after and say to him in an unassuming way, "God forbid that I should think you have been accused justly ; but you were obliged to defend yourself." And thus his justification itself is turned against him.

If he writes a history, and shows himself possessed of high intelligence and some share of righteousness, a thousand unjust accusations are brought against him. Some one will stir up the magistrate against him about an incident that took place ages ago, and if his pen is not to be bought they would have it restrained.

They are more fortunate, however, than those recreants who renounce their faith for a trifling pension ; who hardly make a single farthing by all their impostures ; who overturn the constitution of the empire, diminish the rights of one state to increase those of another, give to princes what they have taken from the people, revive obsolete rights, humor the passions which are in vogue in their time, and the favorite vices of the king ; imposing upon posterity all the more infamously, that means are lacking to destroy their evidence.

But it is not enough that an author should nave to endure all these insults ; it is not enough that he should have been continually anxious about the success of his work. When it sees the light at last, that work, which has cost him so much, brings down upon him quarrels from all quarters. How can he avoid them? He holds an opinion, and maintains it in his writings, quite unaware that another man two hundred leagues away asserts the very reverse. There you have the way in which war arises.

But may he not hope to acquire some degree of fame? No ; at the most he is only esteemed by those who have studied the same branch of science as he. The philosopher

has a supreme contempt for the man whose head is stuffed with facts; and he in his turn is looked upon as a visionary by the possessor of a good memory.

As for those who profess a haughty ignorance, they would have all mankind buried in the same oblivion as themselves.

When a man lacks a particular talent, he indemnifies himself by despising it: he removes the impediment between him and merit; and in that way finds himself on a level with those of whose works he formerly stood in awe.

Lastly, an author requires in pursuit of an equivocal reputation to abstain from all pleasure and sacrifice his health.

PARIS, the 26th of the moon of
Chahban, 1720.

LETTER CXLVI*

USBEK TO RHEDI, AT VENICE

IT WAS long ago said that a minister cannot be great unless he is sincere.

A private person may avail himself of the obscurity in which he is placed; he discredits himself only in the opinion of a few, and the mask he wears deceives others; but a minister who steps aside from the straight path has a witness, a judge, in every subject of the state he governs.

Is it too daring to say that the greatest evil done by an unscrupulous minister is not the damage to the interests of his sovereign, not the ruin wrought among his people, but quite another thing, and in my opinion a thousand times more dangerous, namely, the bad example which he sets?

You know that I have for a long time traveled in the Indies. There I beheld a nation, upright by nature, led away in an instant, from the lowest to the highest in the land, by the bad example of a minister; I beheld an entire race, in whom generosity, integrity, candor, and sincerity

* Another satire on the "system" of Law.

had always been regarded as natural qualities, become, in a flash, the most despicable of peoples; I beheld the contagion spread, sparing not even the healthiest members, and the most upright men act in the unworthiest manner, violating the first principles of justice, upon the vain pretext that injustice had been done to them.

They appealed to detestable laws, necessity, injustice and treachery, in support of the most iniquitous deeds.

I saw honesty banished from business, the holiest contracts become void, and all the laws of the family overturned. I saw miserly debtors, insolent in their poverty, unworthy instruments of the anger of the law and of the exigency of the time, make a pretense of payment, while they plunged a dagger into the bosom of their benefactors. I saw others, viler still, buy for next to nothing, or rather gather from the ground, oak leaves,* and give them in exchange for the substance of widows and orphans.

I saw suddenly spring up in all hearts an insatiable thirst for riches. I saw men form in a moment a detestable conspiracy to acquire wealth, not by honest labor and liberal industry, but by the ruin of the sovereign, of the state, and of their fellow-citizens.

I saw a respectable citizen, in these disastrous times, never retire to rest without saying, "To-day I have ruined one family, to-morrow I shall ruin another."

"I am going," said another, "with a man in black who carries an inkhorn in his hand, and a pointed weapon† behind his ear, to assassinate all my creditors."

Another said, "I find that I am prospering: it is true that when I went three days ago to make a certain payment, I left a whole family in tears; that I have squandered the portions of two well-born girls; that I have deprived a boy of the means of education — his father will die of grief, the mother pines away broken hearted: but I have only done what the law allows me."‡

What crime can be greater than that which a minister commits when he corrupts the morals of a whole nation, debases the loftiest spirits, tarnishes the lustre of rank,

* Paper money. † A pen.

‡ That is, paid a debt in worthless paper.

obscures virtue itself, and levels the highest born with the most despised?

What will posterity say when it has to blush for the shame of its forefathers? What will the next generation say when it compares the iron age of earlier times with the age of gold which gave it birth? I doubt not that the nobles will remove from their genealogies a degree of nobility dishonoring to them, and leave the present generation in the oblivion it has so well deserved.

LETTER CXLVII

The Chief Eunuch to Usbek, at Paris

Things have come to such a pass here that it is not to be endured; your wives imagine that your departure exempts them from all restraint; there has been most atrocious behavior: I myself tremble at the harrowing story I am about to tell.

Some days ago Zelis, on her way to the mosque, let her veil fall, and appeared before the people with her face almost wholly uncovered.

I found Zachi in bed with one of her maids, a thing absolutely forbidden by the laws of the seraglio.

I intercepted, by the merest chance in the world, a letter which I send you: I have never been able to discover to whom it was sent.

Yesterday evening a young fellow was observed in the garden of the seraglio; he made his escape over the wall.

Add to this all that has not come to my knowledge; for you are certainly betrayed. I await your orders; and until the happy moment of their receipt, I shall be in a state of intolerable anxiety. But, if you do not leave all these women to my discretion, I will not be responsible for one of them, and will have news as heartrending to send you every day.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 1st of the moon of Rhegeb, 1717.

LETTER CXLVIII

USBEK TO THE CHIEF EUNUCH, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN

RECEIVE by this letter unlimited power over the whole seraglio; give your orders with as much authority as I do; let fear and terror accompany you; carry penance and chastisement from room to room; let dismay be upon all, and tears flow from every eye in your presence; examine the whole seraglio, beginning with the slaves; spare not my love: let all bow before your dreaded tribunal; bring to light the most hidden secrets; purify that infamous place, and restore banished virtue. For, from this moment, on your head shall be the slightest fault that may be committed. I imagine it was Zelis to whom the letter you intercepted was addressed: examine that matter with the eyes of a lynx.

* * *, the 11th of the moon of Zilhage, 1718.

LETTER CXLIX

NARSIT TO USBEK, AT PARIS

MAGNIFICENT lord, the chief eunuch has just died: as I am the oldest of your slaves I have taken his place until you make known whom you select.

Two days after his death, one of your letters addressed to him was brought to me: I refrained from opening it, but covered it up respectfully, and locked it away, until you shall have informed me of your sacred pleasure.

Yesterday a slave came to me in the middle of the night, and told me that he had seen a young man in the seraglio: I rose, inquired into the matter, and found it had been a vision.

I kiss your feet, most noble lord; and beg you to confide in my zeal, my experience, and my old age.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 5th of the first moon of Gemmadi, 1718.

LETTER CL

Usbek to Narsit, at the Seraglio at Ispahan

Miserable slave! you have in your hands letters which contain orders for prompt and strong measures; the least delay may reduce me to despair; and you remain inactive under an empty pretext!

Atrocious things are going on: perhaps the half of my slaves at this very moment merit death. With this I send you the letter which the chief eunuch wrote me before he died concerning these disorders. Had you opened the dispatch addressed to him, you would have found bloody instructions. Read these instructions, and execute them, or you shall perish.

* * *, the 25th of the moon of
Chalval, 1718.

LETTER CLI

Solim to Usbek, at Paris

Were I to be silent any longer, I should be as guilty as the worst of the criminals in your seraglio.

I was the confidant of the chief eunuch, the most faithful of your slaves. When he felt himself near his end, he sent for me, and spoke to me as follows: "I am dying; but the only grief I have in leaving life, is that with my dying eyes I have seen the guilt of my master's wives. May Heaven preserve him from all the misery which I foresee! After my death, may my threatening shade appear to admonish these faithless ones of their duty, and to keep them still in awe! Here are the keys of those dreaded places; take them to the eldest of the black eunuchs. But if, after my death, he should prove a careless guardian,

remember to let your master know." He expired in my arms with these words on his lips.

I know that he wrote you some time before his death about the conduct of your wives: there is in the seraglio a letter which would have carried terror to every bosom had it been opened. That which you wrote since has been intercepted three leagues from here. I know not how it is; but everything turns out badly. Meantime your wives do not maintain the least reserve: since the death of the chief eunuch, their license knows no limit; Roxana alone abides by her duty, and preserves her modesty. Their morals grow more corrupt every day. The faces of your wives no longer exhibit that stern and noble virtue which reigned there formerly; the unusual gayety which prevails is in my opinion an infallible sign of some uncustomary pleasure. In the smallest trifles, I notice that liberties are taken before unknown. Even among your slaves there prevails a certain disinclination to do their duty, and to obey rules, which surprises me; they are no longer inspired by that ardent zeal for your service, which seemed to animate the whole seraglio.

For the last eight days your wives have been in the country, at one of your most secluded seats. They say that the slave who has charge of it has been bribed; and that, on the day before your wives arrived, he concealed two men in a secret recess in the wall of the principal room, from which they came out at night, when we had retired. The old eunuch, who is at present our chief, is an imbecile, who can be made to believe anything.

I am possessed with a burning desire for vengeance on these traitors: and if Heaven, in your interest, ordains that you should think me capable of ruling, I promise you that, though your wives may not be virtuous, they shall at least be faithful.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 6th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1719.

LETTER CLII

Narsit to Usbek, at Paris

Roxana and Zelis were anxious to go to the country; and I did not think it necessary to refuse them. Happy Usbek! the possessor of faithful wives, and ever watchful slaves; virtue seems to have made its home in the abode which I rule. Be assured that nothing shall happen of which you would not approve.

A misfortune has occurred which gives me great uneasiness. Some Armenian merchants, lately come to Ispahan, brought a letter of yours addressed to me; I sent a slave for it, but he was robbed on his return and the letter lost. Write me therefore at once; because I imagine that, at this juncture, you will have matters of importance to communicate to me.

The Seraglio at Fatme, the 6th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1719.

LETTER CLIII

Usbek to Solim, at the Seraglio at Ispahan

I place the sword in your hand. I intrust you with what is now to me the dearest thing in the world, my vengeance, to wit. In entering upon this new employment, banish all feeling, all pity. I have written to my wives to obey you implicitly; in their guilty confusion, they will sink down at your glance. I must owe to you my happiness and my peace of mind. Give me back my seraglio as I left it. Begin by purifying* it; exterminate the guilty, and make those quake with fear who are inclined to become so. What may you not expect from your

* *Expier* in the original. It is used again by Montesquieu in this unusual sense in *L'Esprit des Lois*.

master for such signal services? It only remains with yourself to obtain a position far above your present one, and above anything you have ever hoped for.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1719.

LETTER CLIV

USBEK TO HIS WIVES, AT THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN

MAY this letter fall among you like a thunderbolt from a stormy sky! Solim is your chief eunuch, not to guard you only, but to punish you. Let the whole seraglio humble itself before him. He is empowered to judge your past deeds; and in future he will subject you to a discipline so harsh, that, if you do not regret your virtue, you will certainly regret your liberty.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1719.

LETTER CLV

USBEK TO NESSIR, AT ISPAHAN

HAPPY is he, who, estimating at its full value a life of ease and tranquillity, makes his own family the centre of his thought, and knows no other land save that in which he was born!

I live in a barbarous country, surrounded by everything that offends me, and absent from all in which I am interested. A sombre melancholy holds me; I am dreadfully depressed: I feel as if I were about to be annihilated; and I only recover myself when some dismal jealousy awakes within me, and brings in its train fear, suspicion, hatred, and regret.

You understand me, Nessir; my heart is as open to you as your own. You would pity me, if you knew my deplorable condition. Sometimes I have to wait six whole

months for news of the seraglio; I count every moment as it passes, prolonging them by my impatience; and when the expected moment is about to arrive, a sudden revolution takes place in my heart; my hand trembles to open a letter that may be fatal; the anxiety which caused my despair seems to me the happiest frame of mind in which I could be, and I dread to be forced from it by some stroke more cruel than a thousand deaths.

But, whatever reason I may have had to leave my country, and although I owe my life to my flight, I can no longer, Nessir, endure this dreadful exile. Should I not die all the same a prey to grief? I have pressed Rica a thousand times to leave this foreign land, but he always thwarts my purpose, and keeps me here under a thousand pretexts: he seems to have forgotten his country, or rather he seems to have forgotten me, he is so indifferent to my grief.

How wretched I am! I wish to see my country again, perhaps only to become more wretched. Ah! what shall I do there? I shall but hand my head to my enemies. That is not all: I shall enter the seraglio, where I must demand an account of the disastrous time of my absence; and should I find any criminals, what am I to do? And if the idea of it alone overcomes me at such a distance, how will it be when my presence brings it home to me? How shall it be, if I must see, if I must hear what I dare not imagine without a shudder? How shall it be, in short, if I myself must order the infliction of punishments, which shall be everlasting witnesses to my own vexation and despair?

I shall shut myself up within walls more terrible to me than to the women which they guard; I shall take with me all my suspicions; the eagerness of my wives will not remove them in the least; in my bed, in their arms, I shall only possess my anxiety: at a time so unsuitable for reflection, my jealousy will make occasions for it. Worthless scum of human kind, vile slaves whose hearts are forever closed to all the feelings of love, you would no longer grumble at your condition, if you knew the misery of mine.

PARIS, the 4th of the moon of
Chahban, 1719.

LETTER CLVI

Roxana to Usbek, at Paris

Horror, darkness, and terror reign in the seraglio; a dreadful affliction is upon us: at every moment a tiger vents on us all his rage. He has tortured two white eunuchs, who have only confessed their innocence; he has sold part of our slaves, and forced us to share among us the services of those which remained. Zachi and Zelis have received in their chambers, in the darkness of the night, most unworthy treatment; the wretch has not feared to lay his sacrilegious hands upon them. He keeps us shut up each in her apartment; and although we are alone there, he forces us to wear our veils. We are no longer allowed to speak; to write would be a crime: we have no liberty except to weep.

A crowd of new eunuchs have entered the seraglio, and beset us night and day: our sleep is constantly interrupted by their real or feigned suspicions. What consoles me is, that all this cannot last forever, and that my troubles will end with my life. And the end is not far distant, cruel Usbek: I will not give you time to put an end to all these outrages.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2d of the moon of Maharram, 1720.

LETTER CLVII*

Zachi to Usbek, at Paris

Oh Heaven! a savage has outraged me even in the very manner of punishing me! He has inflicted upon me that chastisement, the first effect of which is to shock one's modesty; that most humiliating of chastisements, which takes one back to one's childhood.

* The ninth letter added in 1754.

My soul, at first overpowered by shame, recovered consciousness and began to be exasperated, when my cries resounded through the vaults of my apartments. They heard me asking mercy from the vilest of human beings, and trying to excite his pity, in proportion as he became inexorable.

Since that time his insolent and slavish mind dominates mine. His presence, his looks, his words, all horrible things, overwhelm me. When I am alone, I have at least the consolation of weeping; but when he appears before me, frenzy seizes me: I find myself impotent, and I sink into despair.

The tiger dares to tell me that you are the author of all these barbarities. He wishes to deprive me of my love, and even to desecrate the feelings of my heart. When he utters the name of him whom I love, I am unable to complain; I can only die.

I have endured your absence, and my love has been preserved by its own strength. The nights, the days, the moments were all dedicated to you. I was even proud of my love, and yours made me respected here. But now . . . . No, I can no longer bear the humiliation which has overtaken me. If I am innocent, return to love me; return, if I am guilty, that I may die at your feet.

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 2d of the moon of Maharram, 1720.

LETTER CLVIII*

Zelis to Usbek, at Paris

You are a thousand leagues from me, and yet you condemn me! A thousand leagues from me, and yet you punish me!

When a barbarous eunuch lays his vile hands upon me, it is by your order: it is the tyrant who outrages me, and not the instrument of his tyranny.

*The tenth of 1754.

You may, if you choose, redouble your cruel treatment. My heart is at peace, since it can no longer love you. Your soul is debased, and you have become cruel. Rest assured that you are not beloved. Farewell.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 2d of the moon of Maharram, 1720.

LETTER CLIX

SOLIM TO USBEK, AT PARIS

MAGNIFICENT lord, I lament for myself, and I lament for you: never did faithful servant sink into such an abyss of despair. Behold your misfortunes and mine; I write them with a trembling hand.

I swear, by all the prophets of heaven, that since you confided your wives to me, I have watched them night and day; that my anxiety has never left me for a single moment. When I assumed office I commenced with chastisement, which I have discontinued without relaxing my accustomed austerity.

But what am I saying? Why do I boast of fidelity which has been useless to you? Forget all my past services: look upon me as a traitor, and punish me for all the crimes which I have been unable to prevent. Roxana, the haughty Roxana — Oh, Heaven! in whom can we trust henceforth? You suspected Zelis, and never for a moment doubted Roxana; but her fierce virtue was a cruel imposture: it was the veil of her treachery. I surprised her in the arms of a young man, who, when he saw himself discovered, ran at me, and struck me twice with his dagger: the eunuchs came at the noise and surrounded him: he made a long defense, and wounded several of them; he wished even to re-enter the room to die, he said, in the presence of Roxana. But at last he yielded to numbers, and fell at our feet.

I know not, sublime lord, if I shall wait for your stern commands. You have placed your vengeance in my hands; and I ought not to defer it.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 8th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1720.

LETTER CLX*

Solim to Usbek, at Paris

I have made up my mind: your misfortunes shall disappear; I am going to punish.

Already I feel a secret joy: my soul and yours will soon be appeased: we shall exterminate crime, and make innocence turn pale.

Oh, all you who seem made only to be unconscious of your own feelings, and to be indignant even at your own desires, everlasting slaves of shame and modesty, would that I could bring you in crowds into this unhappy seraglio, to astonish you with the torrent of blood I am about to shed!

The Seraglio at Ispahan, the 8th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1720.

LETTER CLXI

Roxana to Usbek, at Paris

Yes, I have deceived you; I have led away your eunuchs; I have made sport of your jealousy; and I have known how to turn your frightful seraglio into a place of pleasure and delight.

I am at the point of death; the poison courses through my veins: for what should I do here, since the only man who bound me to life is no more? I die; but my spirit shall not pass unaccompanied: I have dispatched before me those sacrilegious gaolers who spilt the sweetest blood in the world.

How could you think that I was such a weakling as to imagine there was nothing for me in the world but to worship your caprices; that while you indulged all your desires, you should have the right to thwart me in all mine?

* The eleventh and last of the letters added in 1754.

No: I have lived in slavery, and yet always retained my freedom: I have remodeled your laws upon those of nature; and my mind has always maintained its independence.

You ought to thank me, then, for the sacrifice I made you; for having sunk so low as to seem to be yours; for having, like a coward, hidden in my heart what I ought to have published to all the earth; finally, for having profaned virtue, by permitting my submission to your humors to be called by that name.

You were amazed never to find in me the transports of love: had you known me better you would have found all the violence of hate.

For a long time you have had the satisfaction of believing that you had conquered a heart like mine: now we are both delighted: you thought me deceived, and I have deceived you.

Doubtless such a letter as this you little expected to receive. Can it be possible that after having overwhelmed you with affliction I shall still force you to admire my courage? But all is ended now; the poison destroys me, my strength leaves me, my pen drops from my hand; even my hate grows weaker: I die.

THE SERAGLIO AT ISPAHAN, the 8th of the first moon of Rebiab, 1720.

THE END.

CHINESE LETTERS

THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD

OLIVER GOLDSMITH

INTRODUCTORY NOTE

THE oriental tale had hit the public taste of French and English readers when Montesquieu turned it to a new use. He made it the vehicle of his gentle satire, and Voltaire framed some of his romances on the same model. Goldsmith followed suit in these charming letters, purporting to be the impressions of a cultured Chinese during a sojourn in London. He quoted, in an article in the "Monthly Review," from Voltaire this passage referring to Montesquieu's "Lettres Persanes": "It is written in imitation of the 'Siamese Letters' of Du Freny, and of 'The Turkish Spy'; but it is an imitation which shows what the originals should have been. The success their works met with was, for the most part, owing to the foreign air of their performances; the success of the 'Persian Letters' arose from the delicacy of their satire. That satire which in the mouth of an Asiatic is poignant, would lose all its force when coming from an European." The Citizen of the World is none other than our delightful Goldsmith, who is never so enjoyable as when affecting a disguise.

LETTER I

From Lien Chi Altangi to the Care of Fipsihi, Resident in Moscow, to be Forwarded by the Russian Caravan to Fum Hoam, First President of the Ceremonial Academy at Pekin, in China.

How insupportable, O thou possessor of heavenly wisdom, would be this separation, this immeasurable distance from my friend, were I not able thus to delineate my heart upon paper, and to send thee daily a map of my mind!

I am every day better reconciled to the people among whom I reside, and begin to fancy, that in time I shall find them more opulent, more charitable, and more hospitable, than I at first imagined. I begin to learn somewhat of their manners and customs, and to see reasons for several deviations which they make from us, from whom all other nations derive their politeness, as well as their original.

In spite of taste, in spite of prejudice, I now begin to think their women tolerable. I can now look on a languishing blue eye without disgust, and pardon a set of teeth, even though whiter than ivory. I now begin to fancy there is no universal standard for beauty. The truth is, the manners of the ladies in this city are so very open, and so vastly engaging, that I am inclined to pass over the more glaring defects of their persons, since compensated by the more solid yet latent beauties of the mind. What though they want black teeth, or are deprived of the allurements of feet no bigger than their thumbs, yet still they have souls, my friend; such souls — so free, so pressing, so hospitable, and so engaging! I have received more invitations in the streets of London from the sex in one night, than I have met with at Pekin in twelve revolutions of the moon.

Every evening, as I return home from my usual solitary excursions, I am met by several of these well-disposed daughters of hospitality, at different times, and in different streets, richly dressed, and with minds not less noble than their appearance. You know that nature has indulged me with a person by no means agreeable; yet are they too generous to object to my homely appearance; they feel no repugnance at my broad face and flat nose; they perceive me to be a stranger, and that alone is a sufficient recommendation. They even seem to think it their duty to do the honors of the country by every act of complaisance in their power. One takes me under the arm, and in a manner forces me along; another catches me around the neck, and desires to partake in this office of hospitality; while a third, kinder still, invites me to refresh my spirits with wine. Wine is, in England, reserved only for the rich; yet here even wine is given away to the stranger.

A few nights ago, one of these generous creatures, dressed all in white, and flaunting like a meteor by my side, forcibly attended me home to my own apartment. She seemed charmed with the elegance of the furniture, and the convenience of my situation; and well indeed she might, for I have hired an apartment for not less than two shillings of their money every week. But her civility did not rest here; for, at parting, being desirous to know the hour, and perceiving my watch out of order, she kindly took it to be repaired by a relation of her own, which, you may imagine, will save some expense; and she assures me that it will cost her nothing. I shall have it back in a few days, when mended, and am preparing a proper speech, expressive of my gratitude on the occasion: "Celestial excellence!" I intend to say, "happy I am in having found out, after many painful adventures, a land of innocence, and a people of humanity: I may rove into other climes, and converse with nations yet unknown; but where shall I meet a soul of such purity as that which resides in thy breast! Sure thou hast been nurtured by the bill of the Shin Shin, or sucked the breasts of the provident Gin Hiung. The melody of thy voice could rob the Chong Fou of her whelps, or inveigle the Boh that

lives in the midst of the waters. Thy servant shall ever retain a sense of thy favors; and one day boast of thy virtue, sincerity, and truth, among the daughters of China."—Adieu.

LETTER II

To the Same

I have been deceived! She whom I fancied a daughter of paradise, has proved to be one of the infamous disciples of Han! I have lost a trifle; I have gained the consolation of having discovered a deceiver. I once more, therefore, relax into my former indifference with regard to the English ladies; they once more begin to appear disagreeable in my eyes. Thus is my whole time passed in forming conclusions which the next minute's experience may probably destroy; the present moment becomes a comment on the past, and I improve rather in humility than wisdom.

Their laws and religion forbid the English to keep more than one woman; I therefore concluded, that prostitutes were banished from society. I was deceived; every man here keeps as many wives as he can maintain: the laws are cemented with blood, praised and disregarded. The very Chinese, whose religion allows him two wives, takes not half the liberties of the English in this particular. Their laws may be compared to the books of the Sybils,—they are held in great veneration, but seldom read, or more seldom understood; even those who pretend to be their guardians, dispute about the meaning of many of them, and confess their ignorance of others. The law, therefore, which commands them to have but one wife, is strictly observed only by those for whom one is more than sufficient, or by such as have not money to buy two. As for the rest, they violate it publicly, and some glory in its violation. They seem to think, like the Persians, that they give evident marks of manhood by increasing their seraglio. A mandarine, therefore, here generally keeps four wives, a gentleman three, and a stage-player two.

As for the magistrates, the country justices and squires, they are employed first in debauching young virgins, and then punishing the transgression.

From such a picture you will be apt to conclude, that he who employs four ladies for his amusement has four times as much constitution to spare as he who is contented with one ; that a mandarine is much more clever than a gentleman, and a gentleman than a player ; and yet it is quite the reverse : a mandarine is frequently supported on spindle shanks, appears emaciated by luxury, and is obliged to have recourse to variety, merely from the weakness, not the vigor, of his constitution, the number of his wives being the most equivocal symptom of his virility.

Besides the country squire, there is also another set of men whose whole employment consists in corrupting beauty ; these the silly part of the fair sex call amiable ; the more sensible part of them, however, give them the title of abominable. You will probably demand, what are the talents of a man thus caressed by the majority of the opposite sex? what talents or what beauty is he possessed of, superior to the rest of his fellows? To answer you directly, he has neither talents nor beauty ; but then he is possessed of impudence and assiduity. With assiduity and impudence, men of all ages, and all figures, may commence admirers. I have even been told of some who made professions of expiring for love, when all the world could perceive they were going to die of old age ; and, what is more surprising still, such battered beaux are generally most infamously successful.

A fellow of this kind employs three hours every morning in dressing his head, by which is understood only his hair.

He is a professed admirer, not of any particular lady, but of the whole sex.

He is to suppose every lady has caught cold every night, which gives him an opportunity of calling to see how she does the next morning.

He is, upon all occasions, to show himself in very great pain for the ladies : if a lady drop even a pin, he is to fly in order to present it.

He never speaks to a lady without advancing his mouth to her ear, by which he frequently addresses more senses than one.

Upon proper occasions, he looks excessively tender. This is performed by laying his hand upon his heart, shutting his eyes, and showing his teeth.

He is excessively fond of dancing a minuet with the ladies, by which is only meant walking round the floor eight or ten times with his hat on, affecting great gravity, and sometimes looking tenderly on his partner.

He never affronts any man himself, and never resents an affront from another.

He has an infinite variety of small talk upon all occasions, and laughs when he has nothing more to say.

Such is the killing creature who prostrates himself to the sex till he has undone them; all whose submissions are the effects of design, and who, to please the ladies, almost becomes himself a lady.

LETTER III

To the Same

I am just returned from Westminster Abbey, the place of sepulture for the philosophers, heroes, and kings of England. What a gloom do monumental inscriptions and all the venerable remains of deceased merit inspire! Imagine a temple marked with the hand of antiquity, solemn as religious awe, adorned with all the magnificence of barbarous profusion, dim windows, fretted pillars, long colonnades, and dark ceilings. Think, then, what were my sensations at being introduced to such a scene. I stood in the midst of the temple, and threw my eyes round on the walls, filled with the statues, the inscriptions, and the monuments of the dead.

Alas! I said to myself, how does pride attend the puny child of dust even to the grave! Even humble as I am, I possess more consequence in the present scene than the greatest hero of them all: they have toiled for an hour to

gain a transient immortality, and are at length retired to the grave, where they have no attendant but the worm, none to flatter but the epitaph.

As I was indulging such reflections, a gentleman dressed in black, perceiving me to be a stranger, came up, entered into conversation, and politely offered to be my instructor and guide through the temple. "If any monument," said he, "should particularly excite your curiosity, I shall endeavor to satisfy your demands." I accepted, with thanks, the gentleman's offer, adding, that "I was come to observe the policy, the wisdom, and the justice of the English, in conferring rewards upon deceased merit. If adulation like this," continued I, "be properly conducted, as it can no ways injure those who are flattered, so it may be a glorious incentive to those who are now capable of enjoying it. It is the duty of every good government to turn this monumental pride to its own advantage; to become strong in the aggregate from the weakness of the individual. If none but the truly great have a place in this awful repository, a temple like this will give the finest lessons of morality, and be a strong incentive to true ambition. I am told, that none have a place here but characters of the most distinguished merit." The Man in Black seemed impatient at my observations, so I discontinued my remarks, and we walked on together to take a view of every particular monument in order as it lay.

As the eye is naturally caught by the finest objects, I could not avoid being particularly curious about one monument, which appeared more beautiful than the rest. "That," said I to my guide, "I take to be the tomb of some very great man. By the peculiar excellence of the workmanship, and the magnificence of the design, this must be a trophy raised to the memory of some king who has saved his country from ruin, or lawgiver who has reduced his fellow-citizens from anarchy into just subjection." — "It is not requisite," replied my companion, smiling, "to have such qualifications in order to have a very fine monument here: more humble abilities will suffice." — "What! I suppose, then, the gaining two or three battles, or the taking half a score of towns, is thought a sufficient quali-

fication?" — "Gaining battles, or taking towns," replied the Man in Black, "may be of service; but a gentleman may have a very fine monument here without ever seeing a battle or a siege." — "This, then, is the monument of some poet, I presume — of one whose wit has gained him immortality?" — "No, sir," replied my guide, "the gentleman who lies here never made verses; and as for wit, he despised it in others, because he had none himself." — "Pray tell me then, in a word," said I, peevishly, "what is the great man who lies here particularly remarkable for?" — "Remarkable, sir!" said my companion; "why, sir, the gentleman that lies here is remarkable, very remarkable — for a tomb in Westminster Abbey." — "But, head of my ancestors! how has he got here? I fancy he could never bribe the guardians of the temple to give him a place. Should he not be ashamed to be seen among company where even moderate merit would look like infamy?" — "I suppose," replied the Man in Black, "the gentleman was rich, and his friends, as is usual in such a case, told him he was great. He readily believed them; the guardians of the temple, as they got by the self-delusion, were ready to believe him too; so he paid his money for a fine monument; and the workman, as you see, has made him one of the most beautiful. Think not, however, that this gentleman is singular in his desire of being buried among the great; there are several others in the temple, who, hated and shunned by the great while alive, have come here fully resolved to keep them company now they are dead."

As we walked along to a particular part of the temple, "There," says the gentleman, pointing with his finger, "that is the Poet's Corner; there you see the monuments of Shakespeare, and Milton, and Prior, and Drayton." — "Drayton!" I replied; "I never heard of him before; but I have been told of one Pope — is he there?" — "It is time enough," replied my guide, "these hundred years; he is not long dead; people have not done hating him yet." — "Strange," cried I; "can any be found to hate a man whose life was wholly spent in entertaining and instructing his fellow-creatures?" — "Yes," says my guide, "they hate him for that very reason. There are a set of men called

answerers of books, who take upon them to watch the republic of letters, and distribute reputation by the sheet; they somewhat resemble the eunuchs in a seraglio, who are incapable of giving pleasure themselves, and hinder those that would. These answerers have no other employment but to cry out Dunce and Scribbler; to praise the dead and revile the living; to grant a man of confessed abilities some small share of merit; to applaud twenty blockheads in order to gain the reputation of candor; and to revile the moral character of the man whose writings they cannot injure. Such wretches are kept in pay by some mercenary bookseller, or more frequently the bookseller himself takes this dirty work off their hands, as all that is required is to be very abusive and very dull. Every poet of any genius is sure to find such enemies; he feels, though he seems to despise, their malice; they make him miserable here, and in the pursuit of empty fame, at last he gains solid anxiety."

"Has this been the case with every poet I see here?" cried I.—"Yes, with every mother's son of them," replied he, "except he happened to be born a mandarine. If he has much money, he may buy reputation from your book-answerers, as well as a monument from the guardians of the temple."

"But are there not some men of distinguished taste, as in China, who are willing to patronize men of merit, and soften the rancor of malevolent dullness?"

"I own there are many," replied the Man in Black; "but, alas! sir, the book-answerers crowd about them, and call themselves the writers of books; and the patron is too indolent to distinguish; thus poets are kept at a distance, while their enemies eat up all their rewards at the mandarine's table."

Leaving this part of the temple, we made up to an iron gate, through which my companion told me we were to pass, in order to see the monuments of the kings. Accordingly, I marched up without further ceremony, and was going to enter, when a person who held the gate in his hand told me I must pay first. I was surprised at such a demand; and asked the man, whether the people of Eng-

land kept a show? — whether the paltry sum he demanded was not a national reproach? — whether it was not more to the honor of the country to let their magnificence or their antiquities be openly seen, than thus meanly to tax a curiosity which tended to their own honor? — "As for your questions," replied the gate-keeper, "to be sure they may be very right, because I don't understand them; but, as for that there threepence, I farm it from one — who rents it from another — who hires it from a third — who leases it from the guardians of the temple: and we all must live." I expected, upon paying here, to see something extraordinary, since what I had seen for nothing filled me with so much surprise: but in this I was disappointed; there was little more within than black coffins, rusty armor, tattered standards, and some few slovenly figures in wax. I was sorry I had paid, but I comforted myself by considering it would be my last payment. A person attended us who without once blushing told a hundred lies: he talked of a lady who died by pricking her finger; of a king with a golden head, and twenty such pieces of absurdity. "Look ye there, gentlemen," says he, pointing to an old oak chair, "there's a curiosity for ye; in that chair the kings of England were crowned: you see also a stone underneath, and that stone is Jacob's pillow." I could see no curiosity either in the oak chair or the stone: could I, indeed, behold one of the old kings of England seated in this, or Jacob's head laid upon the other, there might be something curious in the sight; but in the present case, there was no more reason for my surprise, than if I should pick a stone from their streets, and call it a curiosity, merely because one of the kings happened to tread upon it as he passed in a procession.

From hence our conductor led us through several dark walks and winding ways, uttering lies, talking to himself, and flourishing a wand which he held in his hand. He reminded me of the black magicians of Kobi. After we had been almost fatigued with a variety of objects, he at last desired me to consider attentively a certain suit of armor, which seemed to show nothing remarkable. "This armor,"

said he, "belonged to General Monk." — "Very surprising that a general should wear armor!" — "And pray," added he, "observe this cap; this is General Monk's cap." — "Very strange indeed, very strange, that a general should have a cap also! Pray, friend, what might this cap have cost originally?" — "That, sir," says he, "I don't know; but this cap is all the wages I have for my trouble." — "A very small recompense, truly," said I. — "Not so very small," replied he, "for every gentleman puts some money into it, and I spend the money." — "What, more money! still more money!" — "Every gentleman gives something, sir." — "I'll give thee nothing," returned I; "the guardians of the temple should pay you your wages, friend, and not permit you to squeeze thus from every spectator. When we pay our money at the door to see a show, we never give more as we are going out. Sure, the guardians of the temple can never think they get enough. Show me the gate; if I stay longer, I may probably meet with more of those ecclesiastical beggars."

Thus leaving the temple precipitately, I returned to my lodgings, in order to ruminate over what was great, and to despise what was mean, in the occurrences of the day.

LETTER IV

To the Same

I was some days ago agreeably surprised by a message from a lady of distinction, who sent me word, that she most passionately desired the pleasure of my acquaintance, and with the utmost impatience expected an interview. I will not deny, my dear Fum Hoam, but that my vanity was raised at such an invitation: I flattered myself that she had seen me in some public place, and had conceived an affection for my person, which thus induced her to deviate from the usual decorums of the sex. My imagination painted her in all the bloom of youth and beauty. I fancied her attended by the Loves and Graces;

and I set out with the most pleasing expectations of seeing the conquest I had made.

When I was introduced into her apartment, my expectations were quickly at an end: I perceived a little shriveled figure indolently reclined on a sofa, who nodded, by way of approbation, at my approach. This, as I was afterward informed, was the lady herself,— a woman equally distinguished for rank, politeness, taste, and understanding. As I was dressed after the fashion of Europe, she had taken me for an Englishman, and consequently saluted me in her ordinary manner: but when the footman informed her grace that I was the gentleman from China, she instantly lifted herself from the couch, while her eyes sparkled with unusual vivacity. "Bless me! can this be the gentleman that was born so far from home? What an unusual share of SOMETHINGNESS in his whole appearance! Lord, how I am charmed with the outlandish cut of his face! how bewitching the exotic breadth of his forehead! I would give the world to see him in his own country dress. Pray, turn about, sir, and let me see you behind. There, there's a traveled air for you! You that attend there, bring up a plate of beef cut into small pieces; I have a violent passion to see him eat. Pray, sir, have you got your chopsticks about you? It will be so pretty to see the meat carried to the mouth with a jerk. Pray, speak a little Chinese: I have learned some of the language myself. Lord! have you nothing pretty from China about you; something that one does not know what to do with? I have got twenty things from China that are of no use in the world. Look at those jars; they are of the right pea-green: these are the furniture!" — "Dear madam," said I, "these, though they may appear fine in your eyes, are but paltry to a Chinese; but as they are useful utensils, it is proper they should have a place in every apartment." — "Useful, sir!" replied the lady; "sure you mistake; they are of no use in the world." — "What! are they not filled with an infusion of tea, as in China?" replied I. "Quite empty and useless, upon my honor, sir." — "Then they are the most cumbrous and clumsy furniture in the world, as nothing is truly elegant but what unites use with beauty."

— "I protest," says the lady, "I shall begin to suspect thee of being an actual barbarian. I suppose you hold my two beautiful pagods in contempt." — "What!" cried I, "has Fohi spread his gross superstitions here also! Pagods of all kinds are my aversion." — "A Chinese, a traveler, and want taste! It surprises me. Pray, sir, examine the beauties of that Chinese temple which you see at the end of the garden. Is there anything in China more beautiful?" — "Where I stand, I see nothing, madam, at the end of the garden, that may not as well be called an Egyptian pyramid as a Chinese temple; for that little building in view is as like the one as t'other." — "What, sir! is not that a Chinese temple? you must surely be mistaken. Mr. Freeze, who designed it, calls it one, and nobody disputes his pretensions to taste." I now found it vain to contradict the lady in anything she thought fit to advance; so was resolved rather to act the disciple than the instructor. She took me through several rooms, all furnished, as she told me, in the Chinese manner; sprawling dragons, squatting pagods, and clumsy mandarines were stuck upon every shelf: in turning round, one must have used caution not to demolish a part of the precarious furniture.

In a house like this, thought I, one must live continually upon the watch; the inhabitant must resemble a knight in an enchanted castle, who expects to meet an adventure at every turning. "But, madam," said I, "do not accidents ever happen to all this finery?" — "Man, sir," replied the lady, "is born to misfortunes; and it is but fit I should have a share. Three weeks ago, a careless servant snapped off the head of a favorite mandarine: I had scarce done grieving for that, when a monkey broke a beautiful jar; this I took the more to heart, as the injury was done me by a friend! However, I survived the calamity; when yesterday crash went half a dozen dragons upon the marble hearthstone: and yet I live; I survive it all: you can't conceive what comfort I find under afflictions from philosophy. There is Seneca, and Bolingbroke, and some others, who guide me through life, and teach me to support its calamities." I could not but smile at a woman who makes

her own misfortunes, and then deplores the miseries of her situation. Wherefore, tired of acting with dissimulation, and willing to indulge my meditations in solitude, I took leave just as the servant was bringing in a plate of beef, pursuant to the directions of his mistress.— Adieu.

LETTER V

To the Same

The English love their wives with much passion, the Hollanders with much prudence: the English, when they give their hands, frequently give their hearts; the Dutch give the hand, but keep the heart wisely in their own possession. The English love with violence, and expect violent love in return; the Dutch are satisfied with the slightest acknowledgment, for they give little away. The English expend many of the matrimonial comforts in the first year; the Dutch frugally husband out their pleasures, and are always constant, because they are always indifferent.

There seems very little difference between a Dutch bridegroom and a Dutch husband. Both are equally possessed of the same cool unexpecting serenity; they can see neither Elysium nor Paradise behind the curtain; and Yiffrow is not more a goddess on the wedding-night than after twenty years matrimonial acquaintance. On the other hand, many of the English marry in order to have one happy month in their lives; they seem incapable of looking beyond that period; they unite in hopes of finding rapture, and, disappointed in that, disdain ever to accept of happiness. From hence we see open hatred ensue; or, what is worse, concealed disgust under the appearance of fulsome endearment. Much formality, great civility, and studied compliments are exhibited in public; cross looks, sulky silence, or open recrimination, fill up their hours of private entertainment.

Hence I am taught, whenever I see a new married couple more than ordinarily fond before faces, to consider

them as attempting to impose upon the company or themselves; either hating each other heartily, or consuming that stock of love in the beginning of their course which should serve them through their whole journey. Neither side should expect those instances of kindness which are inconsistent with true freedom or happiness to bestow. Love, when founded in the heart, will show itself in a thousand unpremeditated sallies of fondness; but every cool deliberate exhibition of the passion only argues little understanding, or great insincerity.

Choang was the fondest husband, and Hansi the most endearing wife, in all the kingdom of Korea: they were a pattern of conjugal bliss; the inhabitants of the country around saw, and envied their felicity: wherever Choang came, Hansi was sure to follow: and in all the pleasures of Hansi, Choang was admitted a partner. They walked hand in hand wherever they appeared, showing every mark of mutual satisfaction, embracing, kissing — their mouths were forever joined; and, to speak in the language of anatomy, it was with them one perpetual anastomosis.

Their love was so great, that it was thought nothing could interrupt their mutual peace, when an accident happened, which, in some measure, diminished the husband's assurance of his wife's fidelity; for love so refined as his was subject to a thousand little disquietudes.

Happening to go one day alone among the tombs that lay at some distance from his house, he there perceived a lady dressed in the deepest mourning (being clothed all over in white), fanning the wet clay that was raised over one of the graves with a large fan which she held in her hand. Choang, who had early been taught wisdom in the school of Tao, was unable to assign a cause for her present employment; and coming up, civilly demanded the reason. "Alas," replied the lady, her eyes bathed in tears, "how is it possible to survive the loss of my husband, who lies buried in this grave! He was the best of men, the most tender of husbands: with his dying breath he bid me never marry again till the earth over his grave should be dry; and here you see me steadily resolving to obey his

will, and endeavoring to dry it with my fan. I have employed two whole days in fulfilling his commands, and am determined not to marry till they are punctually obeyed, even though his grave should take up four days in drying."

Choang, who was struck with the widow's beauty, could not, however, avoid smiling at her haste to be married; but, concealing the cause of his mirth, civilly invited her home, adding, that he had a wife who might be capable of giving her some consolation. As soon as he and his guest were returned, he imparted to Hansi in private what he had seen, and could not avoid expressing his uneasiness that such might be his own case if his dearest wife should one day happen to survive him.

It is impossible to describe Hansi's resentment at so unkind a suspicion. As her passion for him was not only great, but extremely delicate, she employed tears, anger, frowns, and exclamations, to chide his suspicions: the widow herself was inveighed against; and Hansi declared, she was resolved never to sleep under the same roof with a wretch, who, like her, could be guilty of such barefaced inconstancy. The night was cold and stormy; however, the stranger was obliged to seek another lodging, for Choang was not disposed to resist, and Hansi would have her way.

The widow had scarce been gone an hour, when an old disciple of Choang's, whom he had not seen for many years, came to pay him a visit. He was received with the utmost ceremony, placed in the most honorable seat at supper, and the wine began to circulate with great freedom. Choang and Hansi exhibited open marks of mutual tenderness and unfeigned reconciliation: nothing could equal their apparent happiness; so fond a husband, so obedient a wife, few could behold without regretting their own infelicity; when, lo! their happiness was at once disturbed by a most fatal accident. Choang fell lifeless in an apoplectic fit upon the floor. Every method was used, but in vain, for his recovery. Hansi was at first inconsolable for his death: after some hours, however, she found spirits to read his last will. The ensuing day, she began to moralize and

talk wisdom; the next day, she was able to comfort the young disciple; and on the third, to shorten a long story, they both agreed to be married.

There was now no longer mourning in the apartments; the body of Choang was now thrust into an old coffin, and placed in one of the meanest rooms, there to lie unattended until the time prescribed by law for his interment. In the meantime, Hansi and the young disciple were arrayed in the most magnificent habits; the bride wore in her nose a jewel of immense price, and her lover was dressed in all the finery of his former master, together with a pair of artificial whiskers that reached down to his toes. The hour of their nuptials was arrived; the whole family sympathized with their approaching happiness; the apartments were brightened up with lights that diffused the most exquisite perfume, and a lustre more bright than noon-day. The lady expected her youthful lover in an inner apartment with impatience; when his servant, approaching with terror in his countenance, informed her that his master was fallen into a fit which would certainly be mortal, unless the heart of a man lately dead could be obtained, and applied to his breast. She scarcely waited to hear the end of his story, when, tucking up her clothes, she ran with a mattock in her hand to the coffin where Choang lay, resolving to apply the heart of her dead husband as a cure for the living. She therefore struck the lid with the utmost violence. In a few blows the coffin flew open, when the body, which to all appearance had been dead, began to move. Terrified at the sight, Hansi dropped the mattock, and Choang walked out, astonished at his own situation, his wife's unusual magnificence, and her more amazing surprise. He went among the apartments, unable to conceive the cause of so much splendor. He was not long in suspense before his domestics informed him of every transaction since he first became insensible. He could scarce believe what they told him, and went in pursuit of Hansi herself, in order to receive more certain information, or to reproach her infidelity. But she prevented his reproaches: he found her weltering in blood; for she had stabbed herself to the heart, being unable to survive her shame and disappointment.

Choang, being a philosopher, was too wise to make any loud lamentations: he thought it best to bear his loss with serenity; so, mending up the old coffin where he had lain himself, he placed his faithless spouse in his room; and unwilling that so many nuptial preparations should be expended in vain, he the same night married the widow with the large fan.

As they both were apprised of the foibles of each other beforehand, they knew how to excuse them after marriage. The lived together for many years in great tranquillity, and not expecting rapture, made a shift to find contentment.—Farewell.

LETTER VI

To the Same

The gentleman dressed in black, who was my companion through Westminster Abbey, came yesterday to pay me a visit; and after drinking tea we both resolved to take a walk together, in order to enjoy the freshness of the country, which now begins to resume its verdure. Before we got out of the suburbs, however, we were stopped in one of the streets by a crowd of people, gathered in a circle round a man and his wife, who seemed too loud and too angry to be understood. The people were highly pleased with the dispute, which, upon inquiry, we found to be between Dr. Cacafogo, an apothecary, and his wife. The doctor, it seems, coming unexpectedly into his wife's apartment, found a gentleman there, in circumstances not in the least equivocal.

The doctor, who was a person of nice honor, resolving to revenge the flagrant insult, immediately flew to the chimney-piece, and, taking down a rusty blunderbuss, drew the trigger upon the defiler of his bed: the delinquent would certainly have been shot through the head, but that the piece had not been charged for many years. The gallant made a shift to escape through the window, but the lady still remained; and, as she well knew her husband's temper, undertook to manage the quarrel without a second.

He was furious, and she loud; their noise had gathered all the mob, who charitably assembled on the occasion, not to prevent, but to enjoy the quarrel.

"Alas!" said I to my companion, "what will become of this unhappy creature thus caught in adultery? Believe me, I pity her from my heart; her husband, I suppose, will show her no mercy. Will they burn her, as in India, or behead her, as in Persia? Will they load her with stripes, as in Turkey, or keep her in perpetual imprisonment, as with us in China? Prithee, what is the wife's punishment in England for such offenses?"—"When a lady is thus caught tripping," replied my companion, "they never punish her, but the husband."—"You surely jest," interrupted I; "I am a foreigner, and you would abuse my ignorance!"—"I am really serious," returned he: "Dr. Cacafogo has caught his wife in the act; but, as he had no witnesses, his small testimony goes for nothing: the consequence, therefore, of his discovery will be, that she will be packed off to live among her relations, and the doctor must be obliged to allow her a separate maintenance."—"Amazing!" cried I; "is it not enough that she is permitted to live separate from the object she detests, but must he give her money to keep her in spirits too?"—"That he must," said my guide, "and be called a cuckold by all his neighbors into the bargain. The men will laugh at him, the ladies will pity him; and all that his warmest friends can say in his favor will be that 'the poor good soul has never had any harm in him.'"—"I want patience," interrupted I. "What! are there no private chastisements for the wife—no schools of penitence to show her folly—no rods for such delinquents?"—"Pshaw, man," replied he, smiling, "if every delinquent among us were to be treated in your manner, one half of the kingdom would flog the other." I must confess, my dear Fum, that if I were an English husband, of all things I would take care not to be jealous, nor busily pry into those secrets my wife was pleased to keep from me. Should I detect her infidelity, what is the consequence? If I calmly pocket the abuse, I am laughed at by her and her gallant: if I talk my griefs aloud, like a tragedy hero, I am laughed at by the whole world. The course, then, I

would take would be, whenever I went out, to tell my wife where I was going, lest I should unexpectedly meet her abroad in company with some dear deceiver. Whenever I returned, I would use a peculiar rap at the door, and give four loud hems as I walked deliberately up the staircase. I would never inquisitively peep under her bed, or look behind the curtains. And even though I knew the captain was there, I would calmly take a dish of my wife's cool tea, and talk of the army with reverence.

Of all nations, the Russians seem to me to behave most wisely in such circumstances. The wife promises her husband never to let him see her transgressions of this nature; and he as punctually promises, whenever she is so detected, without the least anger, to beat her without mercy: so they both know what each has to expect; the lady transgresses, is beaten, taken again into favor, and all goes on as before.

When a Russian young lady, therefore, is to be married, her father, with a cudgel in his hand, asks the bridegroom, whether he chooses this virgin for his bride? to which the other replies in the affirmative. Upon this, the father, turning the lady three times round, and giving her three strokes with his cudgel on the back,—"My dear," cries he, "these are the last blows you are ever to receive from your tender father: I resign my authority, and my cudgel, to your husband; he knows better than me the use of either." The bridegroom knows decorum too well to accept of the cudgel abruptly; he assures the father that the lady will never want it, and that he would not for the world make any use of it: but the father, who knows what the lady may want better than he, insists upon his acceptance; upon this there follows a scene of Russian politeness, while one refuses, and the other offers, the cudgel. The whole, however, ends with the bridegroom's taking it; upon which the lady drops a courtesy in token of obedience, and the ceremony proceeds as usual.

There is something excessively fair and open in this method of courtship: by this both sides are prepared for all the matrimonial adventures that are to follow. Marriage has been compared to a game of skill for life: it is gener-

ous thus in both parties to declare they are sharpers in the beginning. In England, I am told, both sides use every art to conceal their defects from each other before marriage, and the rest of their lives may be regarded as doing penance for their former dissimulation.— Farewell.

LETTER VII

To the Same

I was some days ago in company with a politician, who very pathetically declaimed upon the miserable situation of his country: he assured me that the whole political machine was moving in a wrong track, and that scarce even abilities like his own could ever set it right again. "What have we," said he, "to do with the wars on the Continent? We are a commercial nation; we have only to cultivate commerce, like our neighbors the Dutch; it is our business to increase trade by settling new colonies; riches are the strength of a nation; and for the rest, our ships, our ships alone, will protect us." I found it vain to oppose my feeble arguments to those of a man who thought himself wise enough to direct even the ministry. I fancied, however, that I saw with more certainty, because I reasoned without prejudice: I therefore begged leave, instead of argument, to relate a short history. He gave me a smile at once of condescension and contempt; and I proceeded as follows to describe "The rise and declension of the kingdom of Lao."

Northward of China, and in one of the doublings of the Great Wall, the fruitful province of Lao enjoyed its liberty, and a peculiar government of its own. As the inhabitants were on all sides surrounded by the wall, they feared no sudden invasion from the Tartars; and being each possessed of property, they were zealous in its defense.

The natural consequence of security and affluence in any country is a love of pleasure; when the wants of nature are supplied, we seek after the conveniences; when pos-

sessed of these, we desire the luxuries of life; and when every luxury is provided, it is then ambition takes up the man, and leaves him still something to wish for. The inhabitants of the country, from primitive simplicity, soon began to aim at elegance, and from elegance proceeded to refinement. It was now found absolutely requisite, for the good of the state, that the people should be divided. Formerly, the same hand that was employed in tilling the ground, or in dressing up the manufactures, was also, in time of need, a soldier; but the custom was now changed; for it was perceived, that a man bred up from childhood to the arts of either peace or war, became more eminent by this means in his respective profession. The inhabitants were, therefore, now distinguished into artisans and soldiers; and while those improved the luxuries of life, these watched for the security of the people.

A country possessed of freedom has always two sorts of enemies to fear,—foreign foes, who attack its existence from without, and internal miscreants, who betray its liberties within. The inhabitants of Lao were to guard against both. A country of artisans were most likely to preserve internal liberty; and a nation of soldiers were fittest to repel a foreign invasion. Hence naturally arose a division of opinion between the artisans and soldiers of the kingdom. The artisans, ever complaining that freedom was threatened by an armed internal force, were for disbanding the soldiers, and insisted that their walls, their walls alone, were sufficient to repel the most formidable invasion: the warriors, on the contrary, represented the power of the neighboring kings, the combinations formed against their state, and the weakness of the wall which every earthquake might overturn. While this altercation continued, the kingdom might be justly said to enjoy its greatest share of vigor: every order in the state, by being watchful over each other, contributed to diffuse happiness equally, and balanced the state. The arts of peace flourished, nor were those of war neglected: the neighboring powers, who had nothing to apprehend from the ambition of men whom they only saw solicitous, not for riches, but freedom, were contented to traffic with them: they sent their goods to be

manufactured in Lao, and paid a large price for them upon their return.

By these means, this people at length became moderately rich, and their opulence naturally invited the invader: a Tartar prince led an immense army against them, and they as bravely stood up in their own defense; they were still inspired with a love of their country; they fought the barbarous enemy with fortitude, and gained a complete victory.

From this moment, which they regarded as the completion of their glory, historians date their downfall. They had risen in strength by a love of their country, and fell by indulging ambition. The country possessed by the invading Tartars seemed to them a prize that would not only render them more formidable for the future, but which would increase their opulence for the present; it was unanimously resolved, therefore, both by soldiers and artisans, that those desolate regions should be peopled by colonies from Lao. When a trading nation begins to act the conqueror, it is then perfectly undone. It subsists in some measure by the support of its neighbors: while they continue to regard it without envy or apprehension, trade may flourish; but when once it presumes to assert as its right what is only enjoyed as a favor, each country reclaims that part of commerce which it has power to take back, and turns it into some other channel more honorable, though perhaps less convenient.

Every neighbor now began to regard with jealous eyes this ambitious commonwealth, and forbade their subjects any future intercourse with them. The inhabitants of Lao, however, still pursued the same ambitious maxims: it was from their colonies alone they expected riches; and riches, said they, are strength, and strength is security. Numberless were the migrations of the desperate and enterprising of this country to people the desolate dominions lately possessed by the Tartar. Between these colonies and the mother country a very advantageous traffic was at first carried on: the republic sent their colonies large quantities of the manufactures of the country, and they in return provided the republic with an equivalent in ivory and ginseng. By this means the inhabitants became immensely

rich, and this produced an equal degree of voluptuousness; for men who have much money will always find some fantastical modes of enjoyment. How shall I mark the steps by which they declined? Every colony in process of time spreads over the whole country where it first was planted. As it grows more populous, it becomes more polite; and those manufactures for which it was in the beginning obliged to others, it learns to dress up itself. Such was the case with the colonies of Lao: they, in less than a century, became a powerful and a polite people, and the more polite they grew, the less advantageous was the commerce which still subsisted between them and others. By this means the mother country, being abridged in its commerce, grew poorer, but not less luxurious. Their former wealth had introduced luxury; and wherever luxury once fixes, no art can either lessen or remove it. Their commerce with their neighbors was totally destroyed, and that with their colonies was every day naturally and necessarily declining; they still, however, preserved the insolence of wealth, without a power to support it, and persevered in being luxurious, while contemptible from poverty. In short, the state resembled one of those bodies bloated with disease, whose bulk is only a symptom of its wretchedness.

Their former opulence only rendered them more impotent, as those individuals who are reduced from riches to poverty are of all men the most unfortunate and helpless. They had imagined, because their colonies tended to make them rich upon the first acquisition, they would still continue to do so; they now found, however, that on themselves alone they should have depended for support; that colonies ever afforded but temporary affluence; and when cultivated and polite, are no longer useful. From such a concurrence of circumstances they soon became contemptible. The Emperor Honti invaded them with a powerful army. Historians do not say whether their colonies were too remote to lend assistance, or else were desirous of shaking off their dependence; but certain it is, they scarce made any resistance: their walls were now found but a weak defense, and they at length were obliged to acknowledge subjection to the empire of China.

Happy, very happy might they have been, had they known when to bound their riches and their glory; had they known that extending empire is often diminishing power; that countries are ever strongest which are internally powerful; that colonies, by draining away the brave and enterprising, leave the country in the hands of the timid and avaricious; that walls give little protection, unless manned with resolution; that too much commerce may injure a nation as well as too little; and that there is a wide difference between a conquering and a flourishing empire.—Adieu.

LETTER VIII

To the Same

I am disgusted, O Fum Hoam! even to sickness disgusted! Is it possible to bear the presumption of these Islanders, when they pretend to instruct me in the ceremonies of China? They lay it down as a maxim, that every person who comes from thence must express himself in metaphor, swear by Alla, rail against wine, and behave, and talk, and write, like a Turk or Persian. They make no distinction between our elegant manners and the voluptuous barbarities of our Eastern neighbors. Wherever I come, I raise either diffidence or astonishment: some fancy me no Chinese, because I am formed more like a man than a monster; and others wonder to find one born five thousand miles from England endued with common sense. "Strange," say they, "that a man who has received his education at such a distance from London should have common sense; to be born out of England, and yet have common sense! Impossible! He must be some Englishman in disguise; his very visage has nothing of the true exotic barbarity."

I yesterday received an invitation from a lady of distinction, who, it seems, had collected all her knowledge of Eastern manners from fictions every day propagated here, under the titles of Eastern tales and Oriental histories.

She received me very politely, but seemed to wonder that I neglected bringing opium and a tobacco box: when chairs were drawn for the rest of the company, I was assigned my place on a cushion on the floor. It was in vain that I protested the Chinese used chairs, as in Europe; she understood decorum too well to entertain me with the ordinary civilities.

I had scarcely been seated according to her directions, when the footman was ordered to pin a napkin under my chin: this I protested against, as being no way Chinese; however, the whole company, who, it seems, were a club of connoisseurs, gave it unanimously against me, and the napkin was pinned accordingly.

It was impossible to be angry with people who seemed to err only from an excess of politeness, and I sat contented, expecting their importunities were now at an end; but, as soon as ever dinner was served, the lady demanded whether I was for a plate of bear's claws, or a slice of birds' nests. As these were dishes with which I was utterly unacquainted, I was desirous of eating only what I knew, and therefore begged to be helped from a piece of beef that lay on the side table: my request at once disconcerted the whole company. A Chinese eat beef! that could never be: there was no local propriety in Chinese beef, whatever there might be in Chinese pheasant. "Sir," said my entertainer, "I think I have some reason to fancy myself a judge of these matters; in short, the Chinese never eat beef; so that I must be permitted to recommend the pilaw. There was never better dressed at Pekin; the saffron and rice are well boiled, and the spices in perfection."

I had no sooner begun to eat what was laid before me, than I found the whole company as much astonished as before; it seems I made no use of my chop-sticks. A grave gentleman, whom I take to be an author, harangued very learnedly (as the company seemed to think) upon the use which was made of them in China. He entered into a long argument with himself about their first introduction, without once appealing to me, who might be supposed best capable of silencing the inquiry. As the gentleman therefore took my silence for a mark of his own superior

sagacity, he was resolved to pursue the triumph; he talked of our cities, mountains, and animals as familiarly as if he had been born in Quamsi, but as erroneously as if a native of the moon. He attempted to prove that I had nothing of the true Chinese cut in my visage; showed that my high cheek-bones should have been higher, and my forehead broader. In short, he almost reasoned me out of my country, and effectually persuaded the rest of the company to be of his opinion.

I was going to expose his mistakes, when it was insisted, that I had nothing of the true Eastern manner in my delivery. "This gentleman's conversation," says one of the ladies, who was a great reader, "is like our own,—mere chit-chat and common sense: there is nothing like sense in the true Eastern style, where nothing more is required but sublimity. Oh! for a history of Aboulfaouris, the grand voyager, of genii, magicians, rocks, bags of bullets, giants, and enchanters, where all is great, obscure, magnificent, and unintelligible."—"I have written many a sheet of Eastern tale myself," interrupts the author, "and I defy the severest critic to say but that I have stuck close to the true manner. I have compared a lady's chin to the snow upon the mountains of Bomek; a soldier's sword to the clouds that obscure the face of heaven. If riches are mentioned, I compare them to the flocks that graze the verdant Tefflis; if poverty, to the mists that veil the brow of Mount Baku. I have used THEE and THOU upon all occasions; I have described fallen stars and splitting mountains, not forgetting the little houris, who make a pretty figure in every description. But you shall hear how I generally begin—'Eben-benbolo, who was the son of Ban, was born on the foggy summits of Benderabassi. His beard was whiter than the feathers which veil the breast of the penguin; his eyes were like the eyes of doves when washed by the dews of the morning; his hair, which hung like the willow weeping over the glossy stream, was so beautiful that it seemed to reflect its own brightness; and his feet were as the feet of a wild deer which fleeth to the tops of the mountains.' There, there is the true Eastern taste for you; every advance made toward sense is only a

deviation from sound. Eastern tales should always be sonorous, lofty, musical, and unmeaning."

I could not avoid smiling, to hear a native of England attempt to instruct me in the true Eastern idiom; and after he looked round some time for applause, I presumed to ask him, whether he had ever traveled into the East; to which he replied in the negative. I demanded whether he understood Chinese or Arabic; to which also he answered as before. "Then how, sir," said I, "can you pretend to determine upon the Eastern style, who are entirely unacquainted with the Eastern writings? Take, sir, the word of one who is professedly a Chinese, and who is actually acquainted with the Arabian writers, that what is palmed upon you daily for an imitation of Eastern writing no way resembles their manner, either in sentiment or diction. In the East similes are seldom used, and metaphors almost wholly unknown; but in China particularly, the very reverse of what you allude to takes place: a cool phlegmatic method of writing prevails there. The writers of that country, ever more assiduous to instruct than to please, address rather the judgment than the fancy. Unlike many authors of Europe, who have no consideration of the reader's time, they generally leave more to be understood than they express.

"Besides, sir, you must not expect from an inhabitant of China the same ignorance, the same unlettered simplicity, that you find in a Turk, Persian, or native of Peru. The Chinese are versed in the sciences as well as you, and are masters of several arts unknown to the people of Europe. Many of them are instructed not only in their own national learning, but are perfectly well acquainted with the languages and learning of the West. If my word in such a case is not to be taken, consult your own travelers on this head, who affirm that the scholars of Pekin and Siam sustain theological theses in Latin. 'The college of Masprend, which is but a league from Siam,' says one of your travelers, 'came in a body to salute our ambassador. Nothing gave me more sincere pleasure, than to behold a number of priests, venerable both from age and modesty, followed by a number of youths of all nations, Chinese,

Japanese, Tonquinese, of Cochin China, Pegu, and Siam, all willing to pay their respects in the most polite manner imaginable. A Cochin Chinese made an excellent Latin oration upon this occasion; he was succeeded, and even outdone, by a student of Tonquin, who was as well skilled in the Western learning as any scholar of Paris.' Now, sir, if youths who never stirred from home are so perfectly skilled in your laws and learning, surely more must be expected from one like me, who have traveled so many thousand miles; who have conversed familiarly for several years with the English factors established at Canton and the missionaries sent us from every part of Europe. The unaffected of every country nearly resemble each other, and a page of our Confucius and of your Tillotson have scarce any material difference. Paltry affectation, strained allusions, and disgusting finery are easily attained by those who choose to wear them: and they are but too frequently the badges of ignorance or of stupidity, whenever it would endeavor to please."

I was proceeding in my discourse, when, looking round, I perceived the company no way attentive to what I attempted, with so much earnestness, to enforce. One lady was whispering her that sat next, another was studying the merits of a fan, a third began to yawn, and the author himself fell fast asleep. I thought it, therefore, high time to make a retreat; nor did the company seem to show any regret at my preparations for departure: even the lady who had invited me, with the most mortifying insensibility, saw me seize my hat, and rise from my cushion; nor was I invited to repeat my visit, because it was found that I aimed at appearing rather a reasonable creature, than an outlandish idiot.— Adieu.

LETTER IX

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO ——, MERCHANT IN AMSTERDAM.

CEREMONIES are different in every country; but true politeness is everywhere the same. Ceremonies, which take up so much of our attention, are only artificial helps which ignorance assumes in order to imitate politeness, which is the result of good sense and good nature. A person possessed of those qualities, though he had never seen a court, is truly agreeable; and if without them, would continue a clown, though he had been all his life a gentleman usher.

How would a Chinese, bred up in the formalities of an Eastern court, be regarded should he carry all his good manners beyond the Great Wall? How would an Englishman, skilled in all the decorums of Western good breeding, appear at an Eastern entertainment? Would he not be reckoned more fantastically savage than even his unbred footman?

Ceremony resembles that base coin which circulates through a country by the royal mandate; it serves every purpose of real money at home, but is entirely useless if carried abroad: a person who should attempt to circulate his native trash in another country would be thought either ridiculous or culpable. He is truly well-bred, who knows when to value and when to despise those national peculiarities, which are regarded by some with so much observance; a traveler of taste at once perceives that the wise are polite all the world over, but that fools are polite only at home.

I have now before me two very fashionable letters upon the same subject, both written by ladies of distinction; one of whom leads the fashion in England, and the other sets the ceremonies of China: they are both regarded in their respective countries by all the *beau monde*, as standards of taste and models of true politeness, and both give us a true idea of what they imagine elegant in their admirers: which of them understands true politeness, or whether either, you

shall be at liberty to determine. The English lady writes thus to her female confidant: —

"As I live, my dear Charlotte, I believe the colonel will carry it at last; he is a most irresistible fellow, that is flat. So well dressed, so neat, so sprightly, and plays about one so agreeably, that I vow he has as much spirits as the Marquis of Monkeyman's Italian greyhound. I first saw him at Ranelagh; he shines there: he is nothing without Ranelagh, and Ranelagh nothing without him. The next day he sent a card and compliments, desiring to wait on mamma and me to the music subscription. He looked all the time with such irresistible impudence, that positively he had something in his face gave me as much pleasure as a pair-royal of naturals in my own hand. He waited on mamma and me the next morning to know how we got home: you must know the insidious devil makes love to us both. Rap went the footman at the door; bounce went my heart: I thought he would have rattled the house down. Chariot drove up to the window, with his footmen in the prettiest liveries; he has infinite taste, that is flat. Mamma had spent all the morning at her head; but, for my part, I was in an undress to receive him; quite easy, mind that; no way disturbed at his approach: mamma pretended to be as *degagée* as I; and yet I saw her blush in spite of her. Positively he is a most killing devil! We did nothing but laugh all the time he stayed with us; I never heard so many very good things before: at first he mistook mamma for my sister, at which she laughed; then he mistook my natural complexion for paint, at which I laughed; and then he showed us a picture in the lid of his snuffbox, at which we all laughed. He plays picquet so very ill, and is so very fond of cards, and loses with such a grace, that positively he has won me; I have got a cool hundred, but have lost my heart. I need not tell you that he is only a colonel of the trainbands. I am, dear Charlotte, yours forever,

"BELINDA."

The Chinese lady addresses her confidant, a poor relation of the family, upon the same occasion; in which she seems

to understand decorums even better than the Western beauty. You who have resided so long in China will readily acknowledge the picture to be taken from nature; and, by being acquainted with the Chinese customs, will better apprehend the lady's meaning.

FROM YAOUA TO YAYA

"Papa insists upon one, two, three, four hundred taels from the colonel, my lover, before he parts with a lock of my hair. Oh, how I wish the dear creature may be able to produce the money, and pay papa my fortune! The colonel is reckoned the politest man in all Shensi. The first visit he paid at our house — mercy, what stooping and cringing, and stopping, and fidgeting, and going back, and creeping forward, there was between him and papa! one would have thought he had got the seventeen books of ceremonies all by heart. When he was come into the hall, he flourished his hands three times in a very graceful manner. Papa, who would not be outdone, flourished his four times; upon this the colonel began again, and both thus continued flourishing for some minutes in the politest manner imaginable. I was posted in the usual place behind the screen, where I saw the whole ceremony through a slit. Of this the colonel was sensible, for papa informed him. I would have given the world to have shown him my little shoes, but had no opportunity. It was the first time I had ever the happiness of seeing any man but papa, and I vow, my dear Yaya, I thought my three souls would actually have fled from my lips. Ho! but he looked most charmingly: he is reckoned the best shaped man in the whole province, for he is very fat and very short; but even those natural advantages are improved by his dress, which is fashionable past description. His head was close shaven, all but the crown, and the hair of that was braided into a most beautiful tail, that reached down to his heels, and was terminated by a bunch of yellow roses. Upon his first entering the room I could easily perceive he had been highly perfumed with assafœtida. But then his looks — his looks, my dear Yaya, were irresistible. He kept his eyes stead-

fastly fixed on the wall during the whole ceremony, and I sincerely believe no accident could have discomposed his gravity, or drawn his eyes away. After a polite silence of two hours, he gallantly begged to have the singing women introduced, purely for my amusement. After one of them had for some time entertained us with her voice, the colonel and she retired for some minutes together. I thought they would never have come back: I must own he is a most agreeable creature. Upon his return they again renewed the concert, and he continued to gaze upon the wall as usual, when, in less than half an hour more, ho! but he retired out of the room with another. He is, indeed, a most agreeable creature.

"When he came to take his leave, the whole ceremony began afresh: papa would see him to the door; but the colonel swore he would rather see the earth turned upside down than to permit him to stir a single step, and papa was at last obliged to comply. As soon as he was got to the door, papa went out to see him on horseback: here they continued half an hour bowing and cringing, before one would mount or the other go in; but the colonel was at last victorious. He had scarce gone an hundred paces from the house, when papa running out hallooed after him, 'A good journey'; upon which the colonel returned, and would see papa into his house before ever he would depart. He was no sooner got home than he sent me a very fine present of duck eggs painted of twenty different colors. His generosity, I own, has won me. I have ever since been trying over the eight letters of good fortune, and have great hopes. All I have to apprehend is, that after he has married me, and that I am carried to his house close shut up in my chair, when he comes to have the first sight of my face, he may shut me up a second time, and send me back to papa. However, I shall appear as fine as possible: mamma and I have been to buy the clothes for my wedding. I am to have a new *foong hoang* in my hair, the beak of which will reach down to my nose; the milliner from whom we bought that and our ribands cheated us as if she had no conscience, and so, to quiet mine, I cheated her. All this is fair, you know. I remain, my dear Yaya, your ever faithful YAOUA."

LETTER X

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

YOU have always testified the highest esteem for the English poets, and thought them not inferior to the Greeks, Romans, or even the Chinese, in the art. But it is now thought, even by the English themselves, that the race of their poets is extinct; every day produces some pathetic exclamation upon the decadence of taste and genius. "Pegasus," say they, "has slipped the bridle from his mouth, and our modern bards attempt to direct his flight by catching him by the tail."

Yet, my friend, it is only among the ignorant that such discourses prevail; men of true discernment can see several poets still among the English, some of whom equal, if not surpass, their predecessors. The ignorant term that alone poetry which is couched in a certain number of syllables in every line, where a vapid thought is drawn out into a number of verses of equal length, and perhaps pointed with rhymes at the end. But glowing sentiment, striking imagery, concise expression, natural description, and modulated periods, are fully sufficient entirely to fill up my idea of this art, and make way to every passion.

If my idea of poetry, therefore, be just, the English are not at present so destitute of poetical merit as they seem to imagine. I can see several poets in disguise among them, — men furnished with the strength of soul, sublimity of sentiment, and grandeur of expression, which constitutes the character. Many of the writers of their modern odes, sonnets, tragedies, or rebusses, it is true, deserve not the name, though they have done nothing but clink rhymes and measure syllables for years together: their Johnsons and Smolletts are truly poets; though for aught I know, they never made a single verse in their whole lives.

In every incipient language the poet and the prose writer are very distinct in their qualifications: the poet ever proceeds first; treading unbeaten paths, enriching his native

funds, and employed in new adventures. The other follows with more cautious steps, and though slow in his motions, treasures up every useful or pleasing discovery. But when once all the extent and the force of the language is known, the poet then seems to rest from his labor, and is at length overtaken by his assiduous pursuer. Both characters are then blended into one: the historian and orator catch all the poet's fire, and leave him no real mark of distinction, except the iteration of numbers regularly returning. Thus, in the decline of ancient European learning, Seneca, though he wrote in prose, is as much a poet as Lucan; and Longinus, though but a critic, more sublime than Apollonius.

From this then it appears that poetry is not discontinued, but altered among the English at present; the outward form seems different from what it was, but poetry still continues internally the same: the only question remains, whether the metric feet used by the good writers of the last age or the prosaic numbers employed by the good writers of this be preferable? And here the practice of the last age appears to me superior: they submitted to the restraint of numbers and similar sounds; and this restraint, instead of diminishing, augmented the force of their sentiment and style. Fancy restrained may be compared to a fountain, which plays highest by diminishing the aperture. Of the truth of this maxim in every language every fine writer is perfectly sensible from his own experience, and yet to explain the reason would be perhaps as difficult as to make a frigid genius profit by the discovery.

There is still another reason in favor of the practice of the last age, to be drawn from the variety of modulation. The musical period in prose is confined to a very few changes; the numbers in verse are capable of infinite variation. I speak not now from the practice of modern verse writers, few of whom have any idea of musical variety, but run on in the same monotonous flow through the whole poem; but rather from the example of their former poets, who were tolerable masters of this variety, and also from a capacity in the language of still admitting various unanticipated music.

Several rules have been drawn up for varying the poetic measure, and critics have elaborately talked of accents and syllables; but good sense and a fine ear, which rules can never teach, are what alone can in such a case determine. The rapturous flowings of joy, or the interruptions of indignation, require accents placed entirely different, and a structure consonant to the emotions they would express. Changing passions, and numbers changing with those passions, make the whole secret of Western as well as Eastern poetry. In a word, the great faults of the modern professed English poets are, that they seem to want numbers which should vary with the passion, and are more employed in describing to the imagination than striking at the heart.—Adieu.

LETTER XI

To the Same

Some time since I sent thee, O holy disciple of Confucius, an account of the grand abbey, or mausoleum, of the kings and heroes of this nation: I have since been introduced to a temple, not so ancient, but far superior in beauty and magnificence. In this, which is the most considerable of the empire, there are no pompous inscriptions, no flattery paid the dead, but all is elegant and awfully simple. There are, however, a few rags hung round the walls, which have, at a vast expense, been taken from the enemy in the present war. The silks of which they are composed, when new, might be valued at half a string of copper money in China; yet this wise people fitted out a fleet and an army in order to seize them, though now grown old, and scarcely capable of being patched up into a handkerchief. By this conquest the English are said to have gained, and the French to have lost, much honor. Is the honor of European nations placed only in tattered silk?

In this temple I was permitted to remain during the whole service; and were you not already acquainted with the

religion of the English, you might from my description be inclined to believe them as grossly idolatrous as the disciples of Lao. The idol which they seem to address strides like a colossus over the door of the inner temple, which here, as with the Jews, is esteemed the most sacred part of the building. Its oracles are delivered in a hundred various tones, which seem to inspire the worshipers with enthusiasm and awe: an old woman, who appeared to be the priestess, was employed in various attitudes as she felt the inspiration. When it began to speak, all the people remained fixed in silent attention, nodding assent, looking approbation, appearing highly edified by those sounds which to a stranger might seem inarticulate and unmeaning.

When the idol had done speaking, and the priestess had locked up its lungs with a key, observing almost all the company leaving the temple, I concluded the service was over, and taking my hat, was going to walk away with the crowd, when I was stopped by the Man in Black, who assured me that the ceremony had scarcely yet begun. "What!" cried I, "do I not see almost the whole body of the worshipers leaving the church? Would you persuade me that such numbers who profess religion and morality would, in this shameless manner, quit the temple before the service was concluded? You surely mistake: not even the Kalmucks would be guilty of such an indecency, though all the object of their worship was but a joint-stool." My friend seemed to blush for his countrymen, assuring me that those whom I saw running away were only a parcel of musical blockheads, whose passion was merely for sounds, and whose heads are as empty as a fiddle-case: those who remain behind, says he, are the true religious: they make use of music to warm their hearts, and to lift them to a proper pitch of rapture: examine their behavior, and you will confess there are some among us who practice true devotion.

I now looked round me as directed, but saw nothing of that fervent devotion which he had promised: one of the worshipers appeared to be ogling the company through a glass; another was fervent, not in addresses to Heaven, but to his mistress; a third whispered; a fourth took snuff;

and the priest himself, in a drowsy tone, read over the DUTIES of the day.

"Bless my eyes!" cried I, as I happened to look toward the door, "what do I see? one of the worshipers fallen fast asleep, and actually sunk down on his cushion! He is now enjoying the benefit of a trance, or does he receive the influence of some mysterious vision?"—"Alas! alas!" replied my companion, "no such thing; he has only had the misfortune of eating too hearty a dinner, and finds it impossible to keep his eyes open." Turning to another part of the temple, I perceived a young lady just in the same circumstances and attitude: "Strange," cried I; "can she, too, have over-eaten herself?"—"Oh, fie!" replied my friend, "you now grow censorious. She grow drowsy from eating too much! that would be profanation. She only sleeps now from having set up all night at a brag party." "Turn me where I will, then," says I, "I can perceive no single symptom of devotion among the worshipers, except from that old woman in the corner, who sits groaning behind the long sticks of a mourning fan; she indeed seems greatly edified with what she hears."—"Ay," replied my friend, "I knew we should find some to catch you: I know her; that is the deaf lady who lives in the cloisters."

In short, the remissness of behavior in almost all the worshipers, and some even of the guardians, struck me with surprise. I had been taught to believe that none were ever promoted to offices in the temple but men remarkable for their superior sanctity, learning, and rectitude; that there was no such thing heard of as persons being introduced into the church merely to oblige a senator, or provide for the younger branch of a noble family: I expected, as their minds were continually set upon heavenly things, to see their eyes directed there also; and hoped from their behavior to perceive their inclinations corresponding with their duty. But I am since informed that some are appointed to preside over temples they never visit; and, while they receive all the money, are contented with letting others do all the good.—Adieu.

LETTER XII

To the Same

Upon finishing my last letter I retired to rest, reflecting upon the wonders of the glass of Lao, wishing to be possessed of one here, and resolved in such case to oblige every lady with a sight of it for nothing. What fortune denied me waking, fancy supplied in a dream: the glass, I know not how, was put into my possession, and I could perceive several ladies approaching, some voluntarily, others driven forward against their wills, by a set of discontented genii, whom by intuition I knew were their husbands.

The apartment in which I was to show away was filled with several gaming-tables, as if just forsaken; the candles were burnt to the socket, and the hour was five o'clock in the morning. Placed at one end of the room, which was of prodigious length, I could more easily distinguish every female figure as she marched up from the door; but, guess my surprise, when I could scarce perceive one blooming or agreeable face among the number. This, however, I attributed to the early hour, and kindly considered that the face of a lady just risen from bed ought always to find a compassionate advocate.

The first person who came up in order to view her intellectual face was a commoner's wife, who, as I afterward found, being bred up during her virginity in a pawnbroker's shop, now attempted to make up the defects of breeding and sentiment by the magnificence of her dress and the expensiveness of her amusements. "Mr. Showman," cried she, approaching, "I am told you has something to show in that there sort of magic lanthorn, by which folks can see themselves on the inside: I protest, as my Lord Beetle says, I am sure it will be vastly pretty, for I have never seen anything like it before. But how,—Are we to strip off our clothes, and be turned inside out? if so, as Lord Beetle says, I absolutely declare off; for I would not strip for the world before a man's face, and so I tells his Lord-

ship almost every night of my life." I informed the lady that I would dispense with the ceremony of stripping, and immediately presented my glass to her view.

As when a first-rate beauty, after having with difficulty escaped the smallpox, revisits her favorite mirror — that mirror which had repeated the flattery of every lover, and even added force to the compliment — expecting to see what had so often given her pleasure, she no longer beholds the cherry lip, the polished forehead, and speaking blush, but a hateful phiz, quilted into a thousand seams by the hand of deformity; grief, resentment, and rage fill her bosom by turns — she blames the fates and the stars, but, most of all, the unhappy glass feels her resentment: so it was with the lady in question; she had never seen her own mind before, and was now shocked at its deformity. One single look was sufficient to satisfy her curiosity: I held up the glass to her face, and she shut her eyes; no entreaties could prevail upon her to gaze once more. She was even going to snatch it from my hands, and break it in a thousand pieces. I found it was time, therefore, to dismiss her as incorrigible, and show away to the next that offered.

This was an unmarried lady, who continued in a state of virginity till thirty-six, and then admitted a lover when she despaired of a husband. No woman was louder at a revel than she, perfectly free-hearted, and almost, in every respect, a man; she understood ridicule to perfection, and was known even to sally out in order to beat the watch. "Here, you, my dear, with the outlandish face," said she, addressing me, "let me take a single peep. Not that I care three damns what figure I may cut in the glass of such an old-fashioned creature: if I am allowed the beauties of the face by people of fashion, I know the world will be complaisant enough to toss me the beauties of the mind into the bargain." I held my glass before her as she desired, and, must confess, was shocked with the reflection. The lady, however, gazed for some time with the utmost complacency; and, at last, turning to me with the most satisfied smile, said she never could think she had been half so handsome.

Upon her dismission, a lady of distinction was reluctantly hauled along to the glass by her husband. In bringing her forward, as he came first to the glass himself, his mind appeared tinctured with immoderate jealousy, and I was going to reproach him for using her with such severity; but when the lady came to present herself, I immediately retracted: for, alas! it was seen that he had but too much reason for his suspicions.

The next was a lady who usually teased all her acquaintance in desiring to be told of her faults, and then never mended any. Upon approaching the glass, I could readily perceive vanity, affectation, and some other ill-looking blots on her mind; wherefore, by my advice, she immediately set about mending. But I could easily find she was not earnest in the work; for as she repaired them on one side, they generally broke out on another. Thus, after three or four attempts, she began to make the ordinary use of the glass in setting her hair.

The company now made room for a woman of learning, who approached with a slow pace and a solemn countenance, which, for her own sake, I could wish had been cleaner. "Sir," cried the lady, flourishing her hand, which held a pinch of snuff, "I shall be enraptured by having presented to my view a mind with which I have so long studied to be acquainted; but, in order to give the sex a proper example, I must insist that all the company may be permitted to look over my shoulder." I bowed assent, and, presenting the glass, showed the lady a mind by no means so fair as she had expected to see. Ill-nature, ill-placed pride, and spleen were too legible to be mistaken. Nothing could be more amusing than the mirth of her female companions who had looked over. They had hated her from the beginning, and now the apartment echoed with a universal laugh. Nothing but a fortitude like hers could have withstood their raillery: she stood it, however; and when the burst was exhausted, with great tranquillity she assured the company, that the whole was a *deceptio visus*, and that she was too well acquainted with her own mind, to believe any false representations from another. Thus, saying, she retired with a sullen satisfaction, resolved not to

mend her faults, but to write a criticism on the mental reflector.

I must own, by this time I began myself to suspect the fidelity of my mirror; for as the ladies appeared at least to have the merit of rising early, since they were up at five, I was amazed to find nothing of this good quality pictured upon their minds in the reflection: I was resolved, therefore, to communicate my suspicions to a lady whose intellectual countenance appeared more fair than any of the rest, not having above seventy-nine spots in all, besides slips and foibles. "I own, young woman," said I, "that there are some virtues upon that mind of yours; but there is still one which I do not see represented,— I mean that of rising betimes in the morning; I fancy the glass false in that particular." The young lady smiled at my simplicity; and, with a blush, confessed, that she and the whole company had been up all night gaming.

By this time all the ladies, except one, had seen themselves successively, and disliked the show or scolded the showman: I was resolved, however, that she who seemed to neglect herself, and was neglected by the rest, should take a view; and, going up to a corner of the room where she still continued sitting, I presented my glass full in her face. Here it was that I exulted in my success; no blot, no stain appeared on any part of the faithful mirror. As when the large unwritten page presents its snowy spotless bosom to the writer's hand, so appeared the glass to my view. "Here, O ye daughters of English ancestors!" cried I, "turn hither, and behold an object worthy imitation! Look upon the mirror now, and acknowledge its justice, and this woman's pre-eminence!" The ladies, obeying the summons, came up in a group, and looking on, acknowledged there was some truth in the picture, as the person now represented had been deaf, dumb, and a fool from her cradle!

This much of my dream I distinctly remember; the rest was filled with chimeras, enchanted castles, and flying dragons, as usual. As you, my dear Fum Hoam, are particularly versed in the interpretation of those midnight warnings, what pleasure should I find in your explanation! But

that, our distance prevents: I make no doubt, however, but that, from my description, you will very much venerate the good qualities of the English ladies in general, since dreams, you know, go always by contraries.— Adieu.

LETTER XIII

From Lien Chi Altangi to ——, Merchant in Amsterdam.

Happening some days ago to call at a painter's to amuse myself in examining some pictures (I had no design to buy), it surprised me to see a young prince in the working room, dressed in a painter's apron, and assiduously learning the trade. We instantly remembered to have seen each other; and, after the usual compliments, I stood by while he continued to paint on. As everything done by the rich is praised; as princes here, as well as in China, are never without followers; three or four persons, who had the appearance of gentlemen, were placed behind to comfort and applaud him at every stroke. Need I tell, that it struck me with very disagreeable sensations, to see a youth, who by his station in life had it in his power to be useful to thousands, thus letting his mind run to waste upon canvas, and at the same time fancying himself improving in taste, and filling his rank with proper decorum?

As seeing an error and attempting to redress it are only one and the same with me, I took occasion, upon his lordship's desiring my opinion of a Chinese scroll, intended for the frame of a picture, to assure him, that a mandarin of China thought a minute acquaintance with such mechanical trifles below his dignity.

This reply raised the indignation of some, and the contempt of others: I could hear the names of Vandal, Goth, taste, polite arts, delicacy, and fire, repeated in tones of ridicule or resentment. But considering that it was in vain to argue against people who had so much to say,

without contradicting them, I begged leave to repeat a fairy tale. This request redoubled their laughter; but, not easily abashed at the raillery of boys, I persisted, observing, that it would set the absurdity of placing our affections upon trifles in the strongest point of view; and adding, that it was hoped the moral would compensate for its stupidity. "For Heaven's sake," cried the great man, washing his brush in water, "let us have no morality at present; if we must have a story, let it be without any moral." I pretended not to hear; and, while he handled the brush, proceeded as follows: —

"In the kingdom of Bonbobbin, which, by the Chinese annals, appears to have flourished twenty thousand years ago, there reigned a prince endowed with every accomplishment which generally distinguishes the sons of kings. His beauty was brighter than the sun. The sun, to which he was nearly related, would sometimes stop his course, in order to look down and admire him.

"His mind was not less perfect than his body: he knew all things, without having ever read: philosophers, poets, and historians submitted their works to his decision; and so penetrating was he, that he could tell you the merit of a book by looking on the cover. He made epic poems, tragedies, and pastorals with surprising facility; song, epigram, or rebus, was all one to him, though it was observed he could never finish an acrostic. In short, the fairy who presided at his birth had endowed him with almost every perfection, or, what was just the same, his subjects were ready to acknowledge he possessed them all; and, for his own part, he knew nothing to the contrary. A prince so accomplished received a name suitable to his merit; and he was called Bonbennin bonbobbin-bonbobbinet, which signifies, ENLIGHTENER OF THE SUN.

"As he was very powerful, and yet unmarried, all the neighboring kings earnestly sought his alliance. Each sent his daughter, dressed out in the most magnificent manner, and with the most sumptuous retinue imaginable, in order to allure the prince; so that at one time there were seen at his court not less than seven hundred foreign

princesses, of exquisite sentiment and beauty, each alone sufficient to make seven hundred ordinary men happy.

"Distracted in such a variety, the generous Bonbennin, had he not been obliged by the laws of the empire to make choice of one, would very willingly have married them all, for none understood gallantry better. He spent numberless hours of solicitude in endeavoring to determine whom he should choose: one lady was possessed of every perfection, but he disliked her eyebrows; another was brighter than the morning star, but he disapproved her *Fong-Whang;* a third did not lay white enough on her cheek; and a fourth did not sufficiently blacken her nails. At last, after numberless disappointments on the one side and the other, he made choice of the incomparable Nanhoa, Queen of the Scarlet Dragons.

"The preparations for the royal nuptials, or the envy of the disappointed ladies, need no description; both the one and the other were as great as they could be: the beautiful princess was conducted amidst admiring multitudes to the royal couch, where, after being divested of every encumbering ornament, she was placed, in expectance of the youthful bridegroom, who did not keep her long in expectation. He came more cheerful than the morning, and printing on her lips a burning kiss, the attendants took this as a proper signal to withdraw.

"Perhaps I ought to have mentioned in the beginning that, among several other qualifications, the prince was fond of collecting and breeding mice, which being a harmless pastime, none of his counselors thought proper to dissuade him from: he therefore kept a great variety of these pretty little animals, in the most beautiful cages, enriched with diamonds, rubies, emeralds, pearls, and other precious stones: thus he innocently spent four hours each day in contemplating their innocent little pastimes.

"But to proceed: the prince and princess were now in bed; one with all the love and expectation, the other with all the modesty and fear, which is natural to suppose; both willing, yet afraid to begin; when the prince, happening to look toward the outside of the bed, perceived one of the most beautiful animals in the world, a white mouse

with green eyes, playing about the floor, and performing a hundred pretty tricks. He was already master of blue mice, red mice, and even white mice with yellow eyes; but a white mouse with green eyes was what he had long endeavored to possess: wherefore, leaping from bed with the utmost impatience and agility, the youthful prince attempted to seize the little charmer; but it was fled in a moment; for, alas! the mouse was sent by a discontented princess, and was itself a fairy.

"It is impossible to describe the agony of the prince upon this occasion; he sought round and round every part of the room; even the bed where the princess lay was not exempt from the inquiry: he turned the princess on one side and the other, stripped her quite naked, but no mouse was to be found; the princess herself was kind enough to assist, but still to no purpose.

"'Alas!' cried the young prince in agony, 'how unhappy am I to be thus disappointed! never, sure, was so beautiful an animal seen: I would give half my kingdom, and my princess, to him that would find it.' The princess, though not much pleased with the latter part of his offer, endeavored to comfort him as well as she could: she let him know that he had an hundred mice already, which ought to be at least sufficient to satisfy any philosopher like him. Though none of them had green eyes, yet he should learn to thank Heaven that they had eyes. She told him (for she was a profound moralist) that incurable evils must be borne, and that useless lamentations were vain, and that man was born to misfortunes; she even entreated him to return to bed, and she would endeavor to lull him on her bosom to repose: but still the prince continued inconsolable; and regarding her with a stern air, for which his family was remarkable, he vowed never to sleep in the royal palace, or indulge himself in the innocent pleasures of matrimony, till he had found the white mouse with the green eyes."

"Prithee, Colonel Leech," cried his Lordship, interrupting me, "how do you like that nose? don't you think there is something of the manner of Rembrandt in it?—A prince in all this agony for a white mouse, oh, ridiculous!

—Don't you think, Major Vampyre, that eyebrow stippled very prettily? —But pray, what are the green eyes to the purpose, except to amuse children? —I would give a thousand guineas to lay on the coloring of his cheek more smoothly. But I ask pardon; pray sir, proceed."

LETTER XIV

To the Same

"KINGS," continued I, "at that time were different from what they are now; they then never engaged their word for anything which they did not rigorously intend to perform. This was the case of Bonbennin, who continued all night to lament his misfortunes to the princess, who echoed groan for groan. When morning came, he published an edict, offering half his kingdom, and his princess, to the person who should catch and bring him the white mouse with the green eyes.

"The edict was scarcely published, when all the traps in the kingdom were baited with cheese; numberless mice were taken and destroyed; but still the much-wished-for mouse was not among the number. The privy council was assembled more than once to give their advice; but all their deliberations came to nothing, even though there were two complete vermin-killers and three professed rat-catchers of the number. Frequent addresses, as is usual on extraordinary occasions, were sent from all parts of the empire; but though these promised well, though in them he received an assurance that his faithful subjects would assist in his search with their lives and fortunes, yet with all their loyalty, they failed when the time came that the mouse was to be caught.

"The prince, therefore, was resolved to go himself in search, determined never to lie two nights in one place, till he had found what he sought for. Thus, quitting his palace without attendants, he set out upon his journey, and traveled through many a desert, and crossed many a river, over high hills, and down long vales, still restless,

still inquiring wherever he came; but no white mouse was to be found.

"As one day, fatigued with his journey, he was shading himself from the heat of the midday sun, under the arching branches of a banana tree, meditating on the object of his pursuit, he perceived an old woman, hideously deformed, approaching him; by her stoop, and the wrinkles of her visage, she seemed at least five hundred years old; and the spotted toad was not more freckled than was her skin. 'Ah! Prince Bonbennin-bonbobbin-bonbobbinet,' cried the creature, 'what has led you so many thousand miles from your own kingdom? what is it you look for? and what induces you to travel into the kingdom of the Emmets?' The prince, who was excessively complaisant, told her the whole story three times over; for she was hard of hearing. 'Well,' says the old fairy, for such she was, 'I promise to put you in possession of the white mouse with green eyes, and that immediately too, upon one condition.'—'One condition,' cried the prince in a rapture; 'name a thousand: I shall undergo them all with pleasure.'—'Nay,' interrupted the old fairy, 'I ask but one, and that not very mortifying neither; it is only that you instantly consent to marry me.'

"It is impossible to express the prince's confusion at this demand; he loved the mouse, but he detested the bride: he hesitated; he desired time to think upon the proposal; he would have been glad to consult his friends on such an occasion. 'Nay, nay,' cried the odious fairy, 'if you demur, I retract my promise; I do not desire to force my favors on any man. Here, you my attendants,' cried she, stamping with her foot, 'let my machine be driven up; Barbacela, Queen of Emmets, is not used to contemptuous treatment.' She had no sooner spoken than her fiery chariot appeared in the air, drawn by two snails; and she was just going to step in, when the prince reflected, that now or never was the time to be possessed of the white mouse; and quite forgetting his lawful princess Nanhoa, falling on his knees, he implored forgiveness for having rashly rejected so much beauty. This well-timed compliment instantly appeased the angry fairy. She affected a hideous

leer of approbation, and taking the young prince by the hand, conducted him to a neighboring church, where they were married together in a moment. As soon as the ceremony was performed, the prince, who was to the last degree desirous of seeing his favorite mouse, reminded the bride of her promise. 'To confess a truth, my prince,' cried she, 'I myself am that very white mouse you saw on your wedding night in the royal apartment. I now, therefore, give you the choice, whether you would have me a mouse by day and a woman by night, or a mouse by night and a woman by day?' Though the prince was an excellent casuist, he was quite at a loss how to determine; but at last thought it most prudent to have recourse to a blue cat that had followed him from his own dominions, and frequently amused him with its conversation, and assisted him with its advice: in fact, this cat was no other than the faithful princess Nanhoa herself, who had shared with him all his hardships in this disguise.

"By her instructions he was determined in his choice, and returning to the old fairy, prudently observed, that as she must have been sensible he had married her 'only for the sake of what she had,' and not for her personal qualifications, he thought it would, for several reasons, be most convenient if she continued a woman by day, and appeared a mouse by night.

"The old fairy was a good deal mortified at her husband's want of gallantry, though she was reluctantly obliged to comply: the day was therefore spent in the most polite amusements; the gentlemen talked smut, the ladies laughed, and were angry. At last the happy night drew near, the blue cat still stuck by the side of its master, and even followed him to the bridal apartment. Barbacela entered the chamber, wearing a train fifteen yards long, supported by porcupines, and all over beset with jewels, which served to render her more detestable. She was just stepping into bed to the prince, forgetting her promise, when he insisted upon seeing her in the shape of a mouse. She had promised, and no fairy can break her word; wherefore, assuming the figure of the most beautiful mouse in the world, she skipped and played about with an infinity of amusement. The

prince, in an agony of rapture, was desirous of seeing his pretty playfellow move a slow dance about the floor to his own singing; he began to sing, and the mouse immediately to perform with the most perfect knowledge of time, and the finest grace and greatest gravity imaginable. It only began; for Nanhoa, who had long waited for the opportunity in the shape of a cat, flew upon it instantly without remorse, and eating it up in the hundredth part of a moment, broke the charm, and then resumed her natural figure.

"The prince now found that he had all along been under the power of enchantment, that his passion for the white mouse was entirely fictitious, and not the genuine complexion of his soul; he now saw that his earnestness after mice was an illiberal amusement, and much more becoming a rat-catcher than a prince. All his meannesses now stared him in the face; he begged the discreet princess's pardon a hundred times. The princess very readily forgave him; and both returning to their palace in Bonbobbin, lived very happily together, and reigned many years, with all that wisdom which, by the story, they appear to have been possessed of; perfectly convinced by their former adventures, that they who place their affections on trifles at first for amusement, will find those trifles at last become their most serious concern." — Adieu.

LETTER XV

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

ASK an Englishman what nation in the world enjoys most freedom, and he immediately answers, his own. Ask him in what that freedom principally consists, and he is instantly silent. This happy pre-eminence does not arise from the people's enjoying a larger share in legislation than elsewhere, for in this particular several states in Europe excel them; nor does it arise from

a greater exemption from taxes, for few countries pay more; it does not proceed from their being restrained by fewer laws, for no people are burdened with so many; nor does it particularly consist in the security of their property, for property is pretty well secured in every polite state in Europe.

How, then, are the English more free — for more free they certainly are — than the people of any other country, or under any other form of government whatever? Their freedom consists in their enjoying all the advantages of democracy, with this superior prerogative borrowed from monarchy, that the severity of their laws may be relaxed without endangering the constitution.

In a monarchical state, in which the constitution is strongest, the laws may be relaxed without danger; for though the people should be unanimous in the breach of any one in particular, yet still there is an effective power superior to the people, capable of enforcing obedience, whenever it may be proper to inculcate the law either toward the support or welfare of the community.

But in all those governments where laws derive their sanction from the people alone, transgressions cannot be overlooked without bringing the constitution into danger. They who transgress the law in such a case are those who prescribe it, by which means it loses not only its influence, but its sanction. In every republic the laws must be strong, because the constitution is feeble; they must resemble an Asiatic husband, who is justly jealous, because he knows himself impotent. Thus, in Holland, Switzerland, and Genoa, new laws are not frequently enacted, but the old ones are observed with unremitting severity. In such republics, therefore, the people are slaves to laws of their own making, little less than in unmixed monarchies, where they are slaves to the will of one subject to frailties like themselves.

In England, from a variety of happy accidents, their constitution is just strong enough, or, if you will, monarchical enough, to permit a relaxation of the severity of laws, and yet those laws still to remain sufficiently strong to govern the people. This is the most perfect state of

civil liberty of which we can form any idea: here we see a greater number of laws than in any other country, while the people at the same time obey only such as are immediately conducive to the interests of society; several are unnoticed, many unknown; some kept to be revived and enforced upon proper occasions; others left to grow obsolete, even without the necessity of abrogation.

There is scarcely an Englishman who does not almost every day of his life offend with impunity against some express law, and for which, in a certain conjuncture of circumstances, he would not receive punishment. Gaming-houses, preaching at prohibited places, assembled crowds, nocturnal amusements, public shows, and a hundred other instances, are forbid and frequented. These prohibitions are useful; though it be prudent in their magistrates, and happy for the people, that they are not enforced, and none but the venal or mercenary attempt to enforce them.

The law in this case, like an indulgent parent, still keeps the rod, though the child is seldom corrected. Were those pardoned offenses to rise into enormity, were they likely to obstruct the happiness of society, or endanger the state, it is then that justice would resume her terrors, and punish those faults she had so often overlooked with indulgence. It is to this ductility of the laws that an Englishman owes the freedom he enjoys superior to others in a more popular government: every step, therefore, the constitution takes toward a democratic form, every diminution of the regal authority, is, in fact, a diminution of the subject's freedom; but every attempt to render the government more popular not only impairs natural liberty, but even will at last dissolve the political constitution.

Every popular government seems calculated to last only for a time: it grows rigid with age; new laws are multiplying, and the old continue in force; the subjects are oppressed, burdened with a multiplicity of legal injunctions; there are none from whom to expect redress, and nothing but a strong convulsion in the state can vindicate them into former liberty: thus the people of Rome, a few great ones excepted, found more real freedom under their emperors, though tyrants, than they had experienced in the

old age of the commonwealth, in which their laws were become numerous and painful, in which new laws were every day enacting, and the old ones executed with rigor. They even refused to be reinstated in their former prerogatives, upon an offer made them to this purpose; for they actually found emperors the only means of softening the rigors of their constitution.

The constitution of England is at present possessed of the strength of its native oak and the flexibility of the bending tamarisk; but should the people at any time, with a mistaken zeal, pant after an imaginary freedom, and fancy that abridging monarchy was increasing their privileges, they would be very much mistaken, since every jewel plucked from the crown of majesty would only be made use of as a bribe to corruption: it might enrich the few who shared it among them, but would in fact impoverish the public.

As the Roman senators, by slow and imperceptible degrees, became masters of the people, yet still flattered them with a show of freedom, while themselves only were free: so it is possible for a body of men, while they stand up for privileges, to grow into an exuberance of power themselves; and the public become actually dependent, while some of its individuals only govern.

If then, my friend, there should in this country ever be on the throne a king who, through good nature or age, should give up the smallest part of his prerogative to the people; if there should come a minister of merit and popularity — but I have room for no more.— Adieu.

LETTER XVI

To the Same

As I was yesterday seated at breakfast over a pensive dish of tea, my meditations were interrupted by my old friend and companion, who introduced a stranger, dressed pretty much like himself. The gentleman made several apologies for his visit, begged of me to impute his

intrusion to the sincerity of his respect and the warmth of his curiosity.

As I am very suspicious of my company when I find them very civil without any apparent reason, I answered the stranger's caresses at first with reserve; which my friend perceiving, instantly let me into my visitant's trade and character, asking Mr. Fudge, whether he had lately published anything new? I now conjectured that my guest was no other than a bookseller, and his answer confirmed my suspicions.

"Excuse me, sir," says he, "it is not the season; books have their time as well as cucumbers. I would no more bring out a new work in summer than I would sell pork in the dog days. Nothing in my way goes off in summer, except very light goods indeed. A review, a magazine, or a sessions' paper, may amuse a summer reader; but all our stock of value we reserve for a spring and winter trade."—"I must confess, sir," says I, "a curiosity to know what you call a valuable stock, which can only bear a winter perusal."—"Sir," replied the bookseller, "it is not my way to cry up my own goods; but, without exaggeration, I will venture to show with any of the trade: my books at least have the peculiar advantage of being always new; and it is my way to clear off my old to the trunk-makers every season. I have ten new title-pages now about me, which only want books to be added to make them the finest things in nature. Others may pretend to direct the vulgar; but that is not my way; I always let the vulgar direct me; wherever popular clamor arises, I always echo the million. For instance, should the people in general say that such a man is a rogue, I instantly give orders to set him down in print a villain; thus every man buys the book, not to learn new sentiments, but to have the pleasure of seeing his own reflected." — "But, sir," interrupted I, "you speak as if you yourself wrote the books you published; may I be so bold as to ask a sight of some of those intended publications which are shortly to surprise the world?" — "As to that, sir," replied the talkative bookseller, "I only draw out the plans myself; and though I am very cautious of communicating them to any, yet, as

in the end I have a favor to ask, you shall see a few of them. Here, sir, here they are; diamonds of the first water, I assure you. *Imprimis*, a translation of several medical precepts for the use of such physicians as do not understand Latin. *Item*, the young clergyman's art of placing patches regularly, with a dissertation on the different manners of smiling without distorting the face. *Item*, the whole art of love made perfectly easy, by a broker of Change Alley. *Item*, the proper manner of cutting black-lead pencils, and making crayons, by the Right Hon. the Earl of ——. *Item*, the muster-master-general, or the review of reviews."—"Sir," cried I, interrupting him, "my curiosity with regard to title-pages is satisfied; I should be glad to see some longer manuscript, a history or an epic poem."—"Bless me," cries the man of industry, "now you speak of an epic poem, you shall see an excellent farce. Here it is; dip into it where you will, it will be found replete with true modern humor. Strokes, sir; it is filled with strokes of wit and satire in every line."—"Do you call these dashes of the pen strokes?" replied I; "for I must confess I can see no other."—"And pray, sir," returned he, "what do you call them? Do you see anything good now-a-days, that is not filled with strokes—and dashes?—Sir, a well-placed dash makes half the wit of our writers of modern humor. I bought a piece last season that had no other merit upon earth than nine hundred and ninety-five breaks, seventy-two ha-ha's, three good things, and a garter. And yet it played off, and bounced, and cracked, and made more sport than a firework."—"I fancy, then, sir, you were a considerable gainer?"—"It must be owned the piece did pay; but, upon the whole, I cannot much boast of last winter's success: I gained by two murders; but then I lost by an ill-timed charity sermon. I was a considerable sufferer by my 'Direct Road to an Estate,' but the 'Infernal Guide' brought me up again. Ah, sir, that was a piece touched off by the hand of a master; filled with good things from one end to the other. The author had nothing but the jest in view; no dull moral lurking beneath, nor ill-natured satire to sour the reader's good humor; he wisely considered, that moral and

humor at the same time were quite overdoing the business."—"To what purpose was the book then published?" cried I.—"Sir, the book was published in order to be sold; and no book sold better, except the criticisms upon it, which came out soon after: of all kinds of writing, that goes off best at present; and I generally fasten a criticism upon every selling book that is published.

"I once had an author who never left the least opening for the critics: close was the word, always very right and very dull, ever on the safe side of an argument; yet, with all his qualifications, incapable of coming into favor. I soon perceived that his bent was for criticism; and, as he was good for nothing else, supplied him with pens and paper, and planted him, at the beginning of every month, as a censor on the works of others. In short, I found him a treasure; no merit could escape him: but what is most remarkable of all, he ever wrote best and bitterest when drunk."—"But are there not some works," interrupted I, "that, from the very manner of their composition, must be exempt from criticism; particularly such as profess to disregard its laws?"—"There is no work whatsoever but he can criticise," replied the bookseller; "even though you wrote in Chinese, he would have a pluck at you. Suppose you should take it into your head to publish a book, let it be a volume of Chinese letters, for instance; write how you will, he shall show the world you could have written better. Should you, with the most local exactness, stick to the manners and customs of the country from whence you come; should you confine yourself to the narrow limits of Eastern knowledge, and be perfectly simple and perfectly natural, he has then the strongest reason to exclaim. He may, with a sneer, send you back to China for readers. He may observe that, after the first or second letter, the iteration of the same simplicity is insupportably tedious; but the worst of all is, the public, in such a case, will anticipate his censures, and leave you, with all your uninstructive simplicity, to be mauled at discretion."

"Yes," cried I, "but in order to avoid his indignation, and, what I should fear more, that of the public, I would,

in such a case, write with all the knowledge I was master of. As I am not possessed of much learning, at least I would not suppress what little I had; nor would I appear more stupid than nature has made me."—"Here, then," cries the bookseller, "we should have you entirely in our power: unnatural, un-Eastern, quite out of character, erroneously sensible, would be the whole cry. Sir, we should then hunt you down like a rat."—"Head of my father!" said I, "sure there are but two ways; the door must either be shut or it must be open. I must either be natural or unnatural."—"Be what you will, we shall criticise you," returned the bookseller, "and prove you a dunce in spite of your teeth. But, sir, it is time that I should come to business. I have just now in the press a history of China; and if you will but put your name to it as the author, I shall repay the obligation with gratitude."—"What, sir!" replied I, "put my name to a work which I have not written? Never! while I retain a proper respect for the public and myself." The bluntness of my reply quite abated the ardor of the bookseller's conversation; and, after about half an hour's disagreeable reserve, he, with some ceremony, took his leave and withdrew.—Adieu.

LETTER XVII

From the Same

Though naturally pensive, yet I am fond of gay company, and take every opportunity of thus dismissing the mind from duty. From this motive I am often found in the centre of a crowd; and wherever pleasure is to be sold, am always a purchaser. In those places, without being remarked by any, I join in whatever goes forward; work my passions into a similitude of frivolous earnestness, shout as they shout, and condemn as they happen to disapprove. A mind thus sunk for a while below its natural standard is qualified for stronger flights, as those first retire who would spring forward with greater vigor.

Attracted by the serenity of the evening, my friend and I lately went to gaze upon the company in one of the public walks near the city. Here we sauntered together for some time, either praising the beauty of such as were handsome, or the dresses of such as had nothing else to recommend them. We had gone thus deliberately forward for some time, when, stopping on a sudden, my friend caught me by the elbow, and led me out of the public walk. I could perceive by the quickness of his pace, and by his frequently looking behind, that he was attempting to avoid somebody who followed: we now turned to the right, then to the left; as we went forward, he still went faster; but in vain: the person whom he attempted to escape hunted us through every doubling, and gained upon us each moment, so that at last we fairly stood still, resolving to face what we could not avoid.

Our pursuer soon came up, and joined us with all the familiarity of an old acquaintance. "My dear Drybone," cries he, shaking my friend's hand, "where have you been hiding this half a century? Positively I had fancied you were gone to cultivate matrimony and your estate in the country." During the reply I had an opportunity of surveying the appearance of our new companion: his hat was pinched up with peculiar smartness; his looks were pale, thin, and sharp; round his neck he wore a broad black riband, and in his bosom a buckle studded with glass; his coat was trimmed with tarnished twist; he wore by his side a sword with a black hilt; and his stockings of silk, though newly washed, were grown yellow by long service. I was so much engaged with the peculiarity of his dress, that I attended only to the latter part of my friend's reply, in which he complimented Mr. Tibbs on the taste of his clothes, and the bloom in his countenance. "Pshaw, pshaw, Will," cried the figure, "no more of that, if you love me: you know I hate flattery,—on my soul I do; and yet, to be sure, an intimacy with the great will improve one's appearance, and a course of venison will fatten; and yet, faith, I despise the great as much 'as you do; but there are a great many damn'd honest fellows among them, and we must not quarrel with one half, because the other

wants weeding. If they were all such as my Lord Mudler, one of the most good-natured creatures that ever squeezed a lemon, I should myself be among the number of their admirers. I was yesterday to dine at the Duchess of Piccadilly's. My lord was there. 'Ned,' says he to me, 'Ned,' says he, 'I'll hold gold to silver I can tell you where you were poaching last night.' 'Poaching, my lord?' says I: 'faith, you have missed already; for I stayed at home, and let the girls poach for me. That's my way: I take a fine woman as some animals do their prey — stand still, and, swoop, they fall into my mouth.'"

"Ah, Tibbs, thou art a happy fellow," cried my companion, with looks of infinite pity; "I hope your fortune is as much improved as your understanding in such company."—"Improved!" replied the other: "you shall know, — but let it go no farther — a great secret — five hundred a year to begin with — my lord's word of honor for it. His lordship took me down in his own chariot yesterday, and we had a *tête-à-tête* dinner in the country, where we talked of nothing else."—"I fancy you forget, sir," cried I; "you told us but this moment of your dining yesterday in town."—"Did I say so?" replied he coolly; "to be sure, if I said so, it was so. Dined in town! egad, now I do remember, I did dine in town; but I dined in the country too; for you must know, my boys, I eat two dinners. By the by, I am grown as nice as the devil in my eating. I'll tell you a pleasant affair about that: we were a select party of us to dine at Lady Grogram's,— an affected piece, but let it go no farther — a secret. — Well, there happened to be no assafœtida in the sauce to a turkey, upon which, says I, I'll hold a thousand guineas, and say done first, that — But, dear Drybone, you are an honest creature; lend me half-a-crown for a minute or two, or so, just till ——; but hearkee, ask me for it the next time we meet, or it may be twenty to one but I forget to pay you."

When he left us, our conversation naturally turned upon so extraordinary a character. "His very dress," cries my friend, "is not less extraordinary than his conduct. If you meet him this day, you find him in rags; if the next, in embroidery. With those persons of distinction of whom

he talks so familiarly he has scarcely a coffee-house acquaintance. However, both for the interests of society, and perhaps for his own, Heaven has made him poor; and while all the world perceives his wants, he fancies them concealed from every eye. An agreeable companion, because he understands flattery; and all must be pleased with the first part of his conversation, though all are sure of its ending with a demand on their purse. While his youth countenances the levity of his conduct, he may thus earn a precarious subsistence; but when age comes on, the gravity of which is incompatible with buffoonery, then will he find himself forsaken by all; condemned in the decline of life to hang upon some rich family whom he once despised, there to undergo all the ingenuity of studied contempt, to be employed only as a spy upon the servants, or a bugbear to fright the children into obedience." — Adieu.

LETTER XVIII

To the Same

I am apt to fancy I have contracted a new acquaintance whom it will be no easy matter to shake off. My little beau yesterday overtook me again in one of the public walks, and slapping me on the shoulder, saluted me with an air of the most perfect familiarity. His dress was the same as usual, except that he had more powder in his hair, wore a dirtier shirt, a pair of temple spectacles, and his hat under his arm.

As I knew him to be a harmless, amusing little thing, I could not return his smiles with any degree of severity: so we walked forward on terms of the utmost intimacy, and in a few minutes discussed all the usual topics preliminary to particular conversation. The oddities that marked his character, however, soon began to appear; he bowed to several well-dressed persons, who, by their manner of returning the compliment, appeared perfect strangers. At intervals he drew out a pocket-book, seeming to take memorandums, before all the company, with much importance and assiduity. In this manner he led me through

the length of the whole walk, fretting at his absurdities, and fancying myself laughed at not less than him by every spectator.

When we were got to the end of our procession, "Blast me," cried he, with an air of vivacity, "I never saw the Park so thin in my life before! There's no company at all to-day; not a single face to be seen."—"No company!" interrupted I, peevishly; "no company, where there is such a crowd? why, man, there's too much. What are the thousands that have been laughing at us but company?"—"Lord, my dear," returned he, with the utmost good humor, "you seem immensely chagrined; but, blast me, when the world laughs at me, I laugh at the world, and so we are even. My Lord Trip, Bill Squash the Creolian, and I, sometimes make a party at being ridiculous; and so we say and do a thousand things for the joke's sake. But I see you are grave, and if you are for a fine grave sentimental companion, you shall dine with me and my wife to-day; I must insist on't. I'll introduce you to Mrs. Tibbs, a lady of as elegant qualifications as any in nature; she was bred, but that's between ourselves, under the inspection of the Countess of All-night. A charming body of voice; but no more of that,—she will give us a song. You shall see my little girl too, Carolina Wilhelmina Amelia Tibbs, a sweet pretty creature! I design her for my Lord Drumstick's eldest son; but that's in friendship, let it go no farther; she's but six years old, and yet she walks a minuet, and plays on the guitar immensely already. I intend she shall be as perfect as possible in every accomplishment. In the first place, I'll make her a scholar: I'll teach her Greek myself, and learn that language purposely to instruct her; but let that be a secret."

Thus saying, without waiting for a reply, he took me by the arm, and hauled me along. We passed through many dark alleys and winding ways; for, from some motives to me unknown, he seemed to have a particular aversion to every frequented street: at last, however, we got to the door of a dismal-looking house in the outlets of the town, where he informed me he chose to reside for the benefit of the air.

We entered the lower door, which ever seemed to lie most hospitably open; and I began to ascend an old and creaking staircase, when, as he mounted to show me the way, he demanded whether I delighted in prospects; to which answering in the affirmative, "Then," says he, "I shall show you one of the most charming in the world out of my window; we shall see the ships sailing, and the whole country for twenty miles round, tip top, quite high. My Lord Swamp would give ten thousand guineas for such a one; but, as I sometimes pleasantly tell him, I always love to keep my prospects at home, that my friends may visit me the oftener."

By this time we were arrived as high as the stairs would permit us to ascend, till we came to what he was facetiously pleased to call the first floor down the chimney; and knocking at the door, a voice from within demanded, "Who's there?" My conductor answered that it was him. But this not satisfying the querist, the voice again repeated the demand; to which he answered louder than before; and now the door was opened by an old woman with cautious reluctance.

When we were got in, he welcomed me to his house with great ceremony, and turning to the old woman, asked where was her lady? "Good troth," replied she, in a peculiar dialect, "she's washing your twa shirts at the next door, because they have taken an oath against lending out the tub any longer." — "My two shirts!" cried he in a tone that faltered with confusion; "what does the idiot mean?" — "I ken what I mean weel enough," replied the other; "she's washing your twa shirts at the next door, because ——." — "Fire and fury, no more of thy stupid explanations!" cried he; "go and inform her we have got company. Were that Scotch hag," continued he, turning to me, "to be forever in my family, she would never learn politeness, nor forget that absurd poisonous accent of hers, or testify the smallest specimen of breeding or high life; and yet it is very surprising too, as I had her from a parliament man, a friend of mine from the Highlands, one of the politest men in the world; but that's a secret."

We waited some time for Mrs. Tibbs' arrival, during which interval I had a full opportunity of surveying the chamber and all its furniture, which consisted of four chairs with old wrought bottoms, that he assured me were his wife's embroidery; a square table that had been once japanned; a cradle in one corner, a lumbering cabinet in the other; a broken shepherdess, and a mandarine without a head, were stuck over the chimney; and round the walls several paltry unframed pictures, which, he observed, were all his own drawing. "What do you think, sir, of that head in the corner, done in the manner of Grisoni? There's the true keeping in it; it is my own face, and though there happens to be no likeness, a Countess offered me an hundred for its fellow. I refused her, for, hang it, that would be mechanical, you know."

The wife at last made her appearance, at once a slattern and a coquette; much emaciated, but still carrying the remains of beauty. She made twenty apologies for being seen in such odious dishabille, but hoped to be excused, as she had stayed out all night at the gardens with the Countess, who was excessively fond of the horns. "And, indeed, my dear," added she, turning to her husband, "his lordship drank your health in a bumper."—"Poor Jack!" cries he; "a dear good-natured creature, I know he loves me. But I hope, my dear, you have given orders for dinner; you need make no great preparations neither, there are but three of us; something elegant and little will do,—a turbot, an ortolan, a——."—"Or what do you think, my dear," interrupts the wife, "of a nice pretty bit of ox-cheek, piping hot, and dressed with a little of my own sauce?"—"The very thing!" replies he; "it will eat best with some smart bottled beer: but be sure to let us have the sauce his Grace was so fond of. I hate your immense loads of meat; that is country all over; extreme disgusting to those who are in the least acquainted with high life."

By this time my curiosity began to abate, and my appetite to increase: the company of fools may at first make us smile, but at last never fails of rendering us melancholy; I therefore pretended to recollect a prior engagement, and, after having shown my respect to the house, according to the

fashion of the English, by giving the old servant a piece of money at the door, I took my leave; Mrs. Tibbs assuring me that dinner, if I stayed, would be ready at least in less than two hours.

LETTER XIX

From Fum Hoam to Altangi, the Discontented Wanderer

The distant sounds of music, that catch new sweetness as they vibrate through the long-drawn valley, are not more pleasing to the ear than the tidings of a far distant friend.

I have just received two hundred of thy letters by the Russian caravan, descriptive of the manners of Europe. You have left it to geographers to determine the site of their mountains and extent of their lakes, seeming only employed in discovering the genius, the government, and disposition of the people.

In those letters I perceive a journal of the operations of your mind upon whatever occurs, rather than a detail of your travels from one building to another; of your taking a draft of this ruin, or that obelisk; of paying so many *tomans* for this commodity, or laying up a proper store for the passage of some new wilderness.

From your accounts of Russia, I learn that this nation is again relaxing into pristine barbarity; that its great emperor wanted a life of an hundred years more to bring about his vast designs. A savage people may be resembled to their own forests; a few years are sufficient to clear away the obstructions to agriculture, but it requires many ere the ground acquires a proper degree of fertility; the Russians, attached to their ancient prejudices, again renew their hatred to strangers, and indulge every former brutal excess. So true it is, that the revolutions of wisdom are slow and difficult; the revolutions of folly or ambition precipitate and easy. "We are not to be astonished," says Confucius, "that the wise walk more slowly in their

road to virtue, than fools in their passage to vice; since passion drags us along, while wisdom only points out the way."

The German empire, that remnant of the majesty of ancient Rome, appears, from your accounts, on the eve of dissolution. The member of it vast body want every tie of gov ernment to unite them, and seem feebly held together only by their respect for ancient institutions. The very name of country and countrymen, which in other nations makes one of the strongest bonds of government, has been here for some time laid aside; each of its inhabitants seeming more proud of being called from the petty state which gives him birth, than by the more well-known title of German.

The government may be regarded in the light of a severe master and a feeble opponent. The states which are now subject to the laws of the empire, are only watching a proper occasion to fling off the yoke; and those which are become too powerful to be compelled to obedience, now begin to think of dictating in their turn. The struggles in this state are, therefore, not in order to preserve, but to destroy, the ancient constitution: if one side succeeds, the government must become despotic; if the other, several states will subsist without even nominal subordination; but in either case the Germanic constitution will be no more.

Sweden, on the contrary, though now seemingly a strenuous assertor of its liberties, is probably only hastening on to despotism. Their senators, while they pretend to vindicate the freedom of the people, are only establishing their own independence. The deluded people will, however, at last perceive the miseries of an aristocratical government; they will perceive that the administration of a society of men is ever more painful than that of one only. They will fly from this most oppressive of all forms, where one single member is capable of controlling the whole, to take refuge under the throne, which will ever be attentive to their complaints. No people long endure an aristocratical government, when they can apply elsewhere for redress. The lower orders of people may be enslaved for a time by a number of tyrants, but, upon the first opportunity, they will ever take a refuge in despotism or democracy.

As the Swedes are making concealed approaches to despotism, the French, on the other hand, are imperceptibly vindicating themselves into freedom. When I consider that those parliaments (the members of which are all created by the court, the presidents of which can act only by immediate direction) presume even to mention privileges and freedom, who, till of late, received directions from the throne with implicit humility; when this is considered, I cannot help fancying that the genius of freedom has entered that kingdom in disguise. If they have but three weak monarchs more successively on the throne, the mask will be laid aside, and the country will certainly once more be free.

When I compare the figure which the Dutch make in Europe with that they assume in Asia, I am struck with surprise. In Asia, I find them the great lords of all the Indian seas; in Europe, the timid inhabitants of a paltry state. No longer the sons of freedom, but of avarice; no longer assertors of their rights by courage, but by negotiations, fawning on those who insult them, and crouching under the rod of every neighboring power. Without a friend to save them in distress, and without virtue to save themselves, their government is poor, and their private wealth will serve but to invite some neighboring invader.

I long with impatience for your letters from England, Denmark, Holland, and Italy; yet why wish for relations which only describe new calamities, which show that ambition and avarice are equally terrible in every region!—Adieu.

LETTER XX

To the Same

A character, such as you have represented that of your fair companion, which continues virtuous, though loaded with infamy, is truly great. Many regard virtue because it is attended with applause; your favorite only for the internal pleasure it confers. I have often

wished that ladies like her were proposed as models for female imitation, and not such as have acquired fame by qualities repugnant to the natural softness of the sex.

Women famed for their valor, their skill in politics, or their learning, leave the duties of their own sex, in order to invade the privileges of ours. I can no more pardon a fair one for endeavoring to wield the club of Hercules, than I could him for attempting to twirl her distaff.

The modest virgin, the prudent wife, or the careful matron, are much more serviceable in life than petticoated philosophers, blustering heroines, or virago queens. She who makes her husband and her children happy, who reclaims the one from vice, and trains up the other to virtue, is a much greater character than ladies described in romance, whose whole occupation is to murder mankind with shafts from their quiver or their eyes.

Women, it has been observed, are not naturally formed for great cares themselves, but to soften ours. Their tenderness is the proper reward for the dangers we undergo for their preservation; and the ease and cheerfulness of their conversation, our desirable retreat from the fatigues of intense application. They are confined within the narrow limits of domestic assiduity: and, when they stray beyond them, they move beyond their sphere, and consequently without grace.

Fame, therefore, has been very unjustly dispensed among the female sex. Those who least deserved to be remembered, meet our admiration and applause; while many, who have been an honor to humanity, are passed over in silence. Perhaps no age has produced a stronger instance of misplaced fame than the present: the Semiramis and the Thalestris of antiquity are talked of, while a modern character, infinitely greater than either, is unnoticed and unknown.

Catharina Alexowna, born near Derpat, a little city in Livonia, was heir to no other inheritance than the virtues and frugality of her parents. Her father being dead, she lived with her aged mother in their cottage covered with straw; and both, though very poor, were very contented. Here, retired from the gaze of the world, by the labor of

her hands she supported her parent, who was now incapable of supporting herself. While Catharina spun, the old woman would sit by and read some book of devotion; thus, when the fatigues of the day were over, both would sit down contentedly by their fireside, and enjoy the frugal meal with vacant festivity.

Though her face and person were models of perfection, yet her whole attention seemed bestowed upon her mind; her mother taught her to read, and an old Lutheran minister instructed her in the maxims and duties of religion. Nature had furnished her, not only with a ready, but a solid turn of thought, not only with a strong, but a right understanding. Such truly female accomplishments procured her several solicitations of marriage from the peasants of the country; but their offers were refused; for she loved her mother too tenderly to think of a separation.

Catharina was fifteen when her mother died; she now therefore left her cottage, and went to live with the Lutheran minister, by whom she had been instructed from her childhood. In his house she resided in quality of governess to his children, at once reconciling in her character unerring prudence with surprising vivacity.

The old man, who regarded her as one of his own children, had her instructed in dancing and music by the masters who attended the rest of his family; thus she continued to improve till he died, by which accident she was once more reduced to pristine poverty. The country of Livonia was at this time wasted by war, and lay in a most miserable state of desolation. Those calamities are ever most heavy upon the poor; wherefore Catharina, though possessed of so many accomplishments, experienced all the miseries of hopeless indigence. Provisions becoming every day more scarce, and her private stock being entirely exhausted, she resolved at last to travel to Marienburgh, a city of greater plenty.

With her scanty wardrobe packed up in a wallet, she set out on her journey on foot: she was to walk through a region miserable by nature, but rendered still more hideous by the Swedes and Russians, who, as each happened to become masters, plundered it at discretion: but hunger

had taught her to despise the dangers and fatigues of the way.

One evening upon her journey, as she had entered a cottage by the wayside, to take up her lodging for the night, she was insulted by two Swedish soldiers, who insisted upon qualifying her, as they termed it, "to follow the camp." They might probably have carried their insults into violence, had not a subaltern officer, accidentally passing by, come in to her assistance: upon his appearing, the soldiers immediately desisted; but her thankfulness was hardly greater than her surprise, when she instantly recollected in her deliverer, the son of the Lutheran minister, her former instructor, benefactor, and friend.

This was an happy interview for Catharina: the little stock of money she had brought from home was by this time quite exhausted; her clothes were gone, piece by piece, in order to satisfy those who had entertained her in their houses: her generous countryman, therefore, parted with what he could spare, to buy her clothes, furnished her with a horse, and gave her letters of recommendation to Mr. Gluck, a faithful friend of his father's, and superintendent at Marienburgh.

Our beautiful stranger had only to appear to be well received; she was immediately admitted into the superintendent's family, as governess to his two daughters; and though yet but seventeen, showed herself capable of instructing her sex, not only in virtue, but politeness. Such was her good sense and beauty, that her master himself in a short time offered her his hand, which, to his great surprise, she thought proper to refuse. Actuated by a principle of gratitude, she was resolved to marry her deliverer only, even though he had lost an arm, and was otherwise disfigured by wounds in the service.

In order, therefore, to prevent further solicitations from others, as soon as the officer came to town upon duty, she offered him her person, which he accepted with transport, and their nuptials were solemnized as usual. But all the lines of her fortune were to be striking: the very day on which they were married, the Russians laid siege to Marienburgh. The unhappy soldier had now no time to enjoy

the well-earned pleasures of matrimony; he was called off, before consummation, to an attack, from which he was never after seen to return.

In the meantime the siege went on with fury, aggravated on one side by obstinacy, on the other by revenge. This war between the two northern powers at that time was truly barbarous; the innocent peasant, and the harmless virgin, often shared the fate of the soldier in arms. Marienburgh was taken by assault; and such was the fury of the assailants, that not only the garrison, but almost all the inhabitants, men, women, and children, were put to the sword: at length, when the carnage was pretty well over, Catharina was found hid in an oven.

She had been hitherto poor, but still was free; she was now to conform to her hard fate, and learn what it was to be a slave: in this situation, however, she behaved with piety and humility; and though misfortunes had abated her vivacity, yet she was cheerful. The fame of her merit and resignation reached even Prince Menzikoff, the Russian general; he desired to see her, was struck with her beauty, bought her from the soldier her master, and placed her under the direction of his own sister. Here she was treated with all the respect which her merit deserved, while her beauty every day improved with her good fortune.

She had not been long in this situation, when Peter the Great, paying the Prince a visit, Catharina happened to come in with some dry fruits, which she served round with peculiar modesty. The mighty monarch saw, and was struck with her beauty. He returned the next day, called for the beautiful slave, asked her several questions, and found her understanding even more perfect than her person.

He had been forced, when young, to marry from motives of interest; he was now resolved to marry pursuant to his own inclinations. He immediately inquired the history of the fair Livonian, who was not yet eighteen. He traced her through the vale of obscurity, through all the vicissitudes of her fortune, and found her truly great in them all. The meanness of her birth was no obstruction to his design; their nuptials were solemnized in private; the Prince

assuring his courtiers that virtue alone was the properest ladder to a throne.

We now see Catharina, from the low mud-walled cottage, empress of the greatest kingdom upon earth. The poor solitary wanderer is now surrounded by thousands, who find happiness in her smile. She, who formerly wanted a meal, is now capable of diffusing plenty upon whole nations. To her fortune she owed a part of this pre-eminence, but to her virtues more.

She ever after retained those great qualities which first placed her on a throne; and while the extraordinary prince, her husband, labored for the reformation of his male subjects, she studied in her turn the improvement of her own sex. She altered their dresses, introduced mixed assemblies, instituted an order of female knighthood; and at length, when she had greatly filled all the stations of empress, friend, wife, and mother, bravely died without regret, regretted by all.—Adieu.

LETTER XXI

From Lien Chi Altangi to Hingpo, by the way of Moscow

The Europeans are themselves blind, who describe Fortune without sight. No first-rate beauty ever had finer eyes, or saw more clearly: they who have no other trade but seeking their fortune, need never hope to find her; coquette-like, she flies from her close pursuers, and at last fixes on the plodding mechanic, who stays at home, and minds his business.

I am amazed how men call her blind, when, by the company she keeps, she seems so very discerning. Wherever you see a gaming-table, be very sure Fortune is not there; wherever you see an house with the doors open, be very sure Fortune is not there; when you see a man whose pocket-holes are laced with gold, be satisfied Fortune is not there; wherever you see a beautiful woman good-natured and obliging, be convinced Fortune is never there. In

short, she is ever seen accompanying industry, and as often trundling a wheelbarrow as lolling in a coach and six.

If you would make Fortune your friend, or, to personize her no longer, if you desire, my son, to be rich, and have money, be more eager to save than acquire: when people say, Money is to be got here, and money is to be got there, take no notice; mind your own business; stay where you are, and secure all you can get without stirring. When you hear that your neighbor has picked up a purse of gold in the street, never run out into the same street, looking about you in order to pick up such another; or when you are informed that he has made a fortune in one branch of business, never change your own in order to be his rival. Do not desire to be rich all at once; but patiently add farthing to farthing. Perhaps you despise the petty sum; and yet they who want a farthing, and have no friend that will lend them it, think farthings very good things. Whang, the foolish miller, when he wanted a farthing in his distress, found that no friend would lend, because they knew he wanted. Did you ever read the story of Whang in our books of Chinese learning? he who, despising small sums, and grasping at all, lost even what he had.

Whang, the miller, was naturally avaricious; nobody loved money better than he, or more respected those that had it. When people would talk of a rich man in company, Whang would say, I know him very well; he and I have been long acquainted; he and I are intimate; he stood for a child of mine: but if ever a poor man was mentioned, he had not the least knowledge of the man; he might be very well for ought he knew; but he was not fond of many acquaintances, and loved to choose his company.

Whang, however, with all his eagerness for riches, was in reality poor; he had nothing but the profits of his mill to support him; but though these were small, they were certain: while his mill stood and went, he was sure of eating; and his frugality was such, that he every day laid some money by, which he would at intervals count and contemplate with much satisfaction. Yet still his acquisi-

tions were not equal to his desires; he only found himself above want, whereas he desired to be possessed of affluence.

One day, as he was indulging these wishes, he was informed that a neighbor of his had found a pan of money under ground, having dreamed of it three nights running before. These tidings were daggers to the heart of poor Whang. "Here am I," says he, "toiling and moiling from morning till night for a few paltry farthings, while neighbor Hunks only goes quietly to bed, and dreams himself into thousands before morning. Oh that I could dream like him! with what pleasure would I dig round the pan; how slyly would I carry it home; not even my wife should see me; and then, oh, the pleasure of thrusting one's hand into a heap of gold up to the elbow!"

Such reflections only served to make the miller unhappy; he discontinued his former assiduity; he was quite disgusted with small gains, and his customers began to forsake him. Every day he repeated the wish, and every night laid himself down in order to dream. Fortune, that was for a long time unkind, at last, however, seemed to smile upon his distresses, and indulged him with the wished-for vision. He dreamed, that under a certain part of the foundation of his mill there was concealed a monstrous pan of gold and diamonds, buried deep in the ground, and covered with a large flat stone. He rose up, thanked the stars that were at last pleased to take pity on his sufferings, and concealed his good luck from every person, as is usual in money dreams, in order to have the vision repeated the two succeeding nights, by which he should be certain of its veracity. His wishes in this also were answered; he still dreamed of the same pan of money, in the very same place.

Now, therefore, it was past a doubt; so, getting up early the third morning, he repairs alone, with a mattock in his hand, to the mill, and began to undermine that part of the wall which the vision directed. The first omen of success that he met was a broken mug; digging still deeper, he turns up a house tile, quite new and entire. At last, after much digging, he came to the broad flat

stone, but then so large, that it was beyond one man's strength to remove it. "Here," cried he, in raptures, to himself, "here it is! under this stone there is room for a very large pan of diamonds indeed! I must e'en go home to my wife, and tell her the whole affair, and get her to assist me in turning it up." Away therefore he goes, and acquaints his wife with every circumstance of their good fortune. Her raptures on this occasion may easily be imagined; she flew round his neck, and embraced him in an agony of joy: but those transports, however, did not delay their eagerness to know the exact sum; returning, therefore, speedily together to the place where Whang had been digging, there they found — not indeed the expected treasure, but the mill, their only support, undermined and fallen. — Adieu.

LETTER XXII

From Lien Chi Altangi to Fum Hoam, First President of the Ceremonial Academy at Pekin in China

The people of London are as fond of walking as our friends at Pekin of riding; one of the principal entertainments of the citizens here in summer is to repair about nightfall to a garden not far from town, where they walk about, show their best clothes and best faces, and listen to a concert provided for the occasion.

I accepted an invitation a few evenings ago from my old friend, the Man in Black, to be one of a party that was to sup there; and at the appointed hour waited upon him at his lodgings. There I found the company assembled, and expecting my arrival. Our party consisted of my friend, in superlative finery, his stockings rolled, a black velvet waistcoat, which was formerly new, and a gray wig combed down in imitation of hair; a pawnbroker's widow, of whom, by the by, my friend was a professed admirer, dressed out in green damask, with three gold rings on every finger; Mr. Tibbs, the second-rate beau I have formerly described; together with his lady, in

flimsy silk, dirty gauze instead of linen, and an hat as big as an umbrella.

Our first difficulty was in settling how we should set out. Mrs. Tibbs had a natural aversion to the water, and the widow, being a little in flesh, as warmly protested against walking; a coach was therefore agreed upon; which being too small to carry five, Mr. Tibbs consented to sit in his wife's lap.

In this manner, therefore, we set forward, being entertained by the way with the bodings of Mr. Tibbs, who assured us he did not expect to see a single creature for the evening above the degree of a cheesemonger; that this was the last night of the gardens, and that consequently we should be pestered with the nobility and gentry from Thames Street and Crooked Lane; with several other prophetic ejaculations, probably inspired by the uneasiness of his situation.

The illuminations began before we arrived, and I must confess, that upon entering the gardens I found every sense overpaid with more than expected pleasure: the lights everywhere glimmering through the scarcely moving trees — the full-bodied concert bursting on the stillness of the night — the natural concert of the birds, in the more retired part of the grove, vying with that which was formed by art — the company gayly dressed, looking satisfaction — and the tables spread with various delicacies,— all conspired to fill my imagination with the visionary happiness of the Arabian lawgiver, and lifted me into an ecstasy of admiration. "Head of Confucius," cried I to my friend, "this is fine! this unites rural beauty with courtly magnificence! if we except the virgins of immortality, that hang on every tree, and may be plucked at every desire, I do not see how this falls short of Mahomet's Paradise!"—"As for virgins," cries my friend, "it is true they are a fruit that do not much abound in our gardens here; but if ladies, as plenty as apples in autumn, and as complying as any Houri of them all, can content you, I fancy we have no need to go to heaven for Paradise."

I was going to second his remarks, when we were called to a consultation by Mr. Tibbs and the rest of the com-

pany, to know in what manner we were to lay out the evening to the greatest advantage. Mrs. Tibbs was for keeping the genteel walk of the garden, where, she observed, there was always the very best company; the widow, on the contrary, who came but once a season, was for securing a good standing place to see the waterworks, which she assured us would begin in less than an hour at farthest: a dispute therefore began, and as it was managed between two of very opposite characters, it threatened to grow more bitter at every reply. Mrs. Tibbs wondered how people could pretend to know the polite world, who had received all their rudiments of breeding behind a counter: to which the other replied, that though some people sat behind counters, yet they could sit at the head of their own tables too, and carve three good dishes of hot meat whenever they thought proper; which was more than some people could say for themselves, that hardly knew a rabbit and onions from a green goose and gooseberries.

It is hard to say where this might have ended, had not the husband, who probably knew the impetuosity of his wife's disposition, proposed to end the dispute by adjourning to a box, and try if there was anything to be had for supper that was supportable. To this we all consented; but here a new distress arose: Mr. and Mrs. Tibbs would sit in none but a genteel box — a box where they might see and be seen — one, as they expressed it, in the very focus of public view; but such a box was not easy to be obtained, for though we were perfectly convinced of our own gentility, and the gentility of our appearance, yet we found it a difficult matter to persuade the keepers of the boxes to be of our opinion; they chose to reserve genteel boxes for what they judged more genteel company.

At last, however, we were fixed, though somewhat obscurely, and supplied with the usual entertainment of the place. The widow found the supper excellent, but Mrs. Tibbs thought everything detestable. "Come, come, my dear," cries the husband, by way of consolation, "to be sure we can't find such dressing here as we have at Lord Crump's or Lady Crimp's; but, for Vauxhall dressing, it is pretty good: it is not their victuals, indeed, I find fault

with, but their wine; their wine," cries he, drinking off a glass, "indeed, is most abominable."

By this last contradiction the widow was fairly conquered in point of politeness. She perceived now that she had no pretensions in the world to taste; her very senses were vulgar, since she had praised detestable custard, and smacked at wretched wine; she was therefore content to yield the victory, and for the rest of the night to listen and improve. It is true, she would now and then forget herself, and confess she was pleased; but they soon brought her back again to miserable refinement. She once praised the painting of the box in which we were sitting, but was soon convinced that such paltry pieces ought rather to excite horror than satisfaction: she ventured again to commend one of the singers, but Mrs. Tibbs soon let her know, in the style of a connoisseur, that the singer in question had neither ear, voice, nor judgment.

Mr. Tibbs, now willing to prove that his wife's pretensions to music were just, entreated her to favor the company with a song; but to this she gave a positive denial — "for you know very well, my dear," says she, "that I am not in voice to-day, and when one's voice is not equal to one's judgment, what signifies singing? besides, as there is no accompaniment, it would be but spoiling music." All these excuses, however, were overruled by the rest of the company, who, though one would think they already had music enough, joined in the entreaty. But particularly the widow, now willing to convince the company of her breeding, pressed so warmly, that she seemed determined to take no refusal. At last, then, the lady complied, and after humming for some minutes, began with such a voice, and such affectation, as, I could perceive, gave but little satisfaction to any except her husband. He sat with rapture in his eye, and beat time with his hand on the table.

You must observe, my friend, that it is the custom of this country, when a lady or gentleman happens to sing, for the company to sit as mute and motionless as statues. Every feature, every limb, must seem to correspond in fixed attention; and while the song continues, they are to remain in a state of universal petrifaction. In this mortify-

ing situation we had continued for some time, listening to the song, and looking with tranquillity, when the master of the box came to inform us, that the waterworks were going to begin. At this information I could instantly perceive the widow bounce from her seat; but correcting herself, she sat down again, repressed by motives of good breeding. Mrs. Tibbs, who had seen the waterworks an hundred times, resolving not to be interrupted, continued her song without any share of mercy, nor had the smallest pity on our impatience. The widow's face, I own, gave me high entertainment; in it I could plainly read the struggle she felt between good breeding and curiosity: she talked of the waterworks the whole evening before, and seemed to have come merely in order to see them; but then she could not bounce out in the very middle of a song, for that would be forfeiting all pretensions to high life, or high-lived company, ever after. Mrs. Tibbs, therefore, kept on singing, and we continued to listen, till at last, when the song was just concluded, the waiter came to inform us that the waterworks were over.

"The waterworks over!" cried the widow; "the waterworks over already! that's impossible! they can't be over so soon!" — "It is not my business," replied the fellow, "to contradict your ladyship; I'll run again and see." He went, and soon returned with a confirmation of the dismal tidings. No ceremony could now bind my friend's disappointed mistress. She testified her displeasure in the openest manner; in short, she now began to find fault in turn, and at last insisted upon going home, just at the time that Mr. and Mrs. Tibbs assured the company that the polite hours were going to begin, and that the ladies would instantaneously be entertained with the horns.— Adieu.

LETTER XXIII

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

THE shops of London are as well furnished as those of Pekin. Those of London have a picture hung at their door, informing the passengers what they have to sell, as those at Pekin have a board to assure the buyer that they have no intent to cheat him.

I was this morning to buy silk for a nightcap. Immediately upon entering the mercer's shop, the master and his two men, with wigs plastered with powder, appeared to ask my commands. They were certainly the civillest people alive; if I but looked, they flew to the place where I cast my eye; every motion of mine sent them running round the whole shop for my satisfaction. I informed them that I wanted what was good, and they showed me not less than forty pieces, and each was better than the former, the prettiest pattern in nature, and the fittest in the world for nightcaps. "My very good friend," said I to the mercer, "you must not pretend to instruct me in silks; I know these in particular to be no better than your mere flimsy bungees."—"That may be," cried the mercer, who, I afterward found, had never contradicted a man in his life: "I cannot pretend to say but they may; but I can assure you, my Lady Trail has had a sack from this piece this very morning."—"But, friend," said I, "though my lady has chosen a sack from it, I see no necessity that I should wear it for a nightcap."—"That may be," returned he again; "yet what becomes a pretty lady, will at any time look well on a handsome gentleman." This short compliment was thrown in so very seasonably upon my ugly face, that even though I disliked the silk, I desired him to cut me off the pattern of a nightcap.

While this business was consigned to his journeymen, the master himself took down some pieces of silk still finer than any I had yet seen, and spreading them before me, "There,"

cries he, "there's beauty; my Lord Snakeskin has bespoke the fellow to this for the birthnight this very morning; it would look charmingly in waistcoats."—"But I don't want a waistcoat," replied I.—"Not want a waistcoat!" returned the mercer: "then I would advise you to buy one; when waistcoats are wanted, you may depend upon it they will come dear. Always buy before you want, and you are sure to be well used, as they say in Cheapside." There was so much justice in his advice, that I could not refuse taking it; besides, the silk, which was really a good one, increased the temptation; so I gave orders for that too.

As I was waiting to have my bargains measured and cut which, I know not how, they executed but slowly, during the interval the mercer entertained me with the modern manner of some of the nobility receiving company in their morning gowns. "Perhaps, sir," adds he, "you have a mind to see what kind of silk is universally worn." Without waiting for my reply, he spreads a piece before me, which might be reckoned beautiful even in China. "If the nobility," continues he, "were to know I sold this to any under a Right Honorable, I should certainly lose their custom; you see, my lord, it is at once rich, tasty, and quite the thing."—"I am no lord," interrupted I.—"I beg pardon," cried he; "but be pleased to remember, when you intend buying a morning gown, that you had an offer from me of something worth money. Conscience, sir, conscience is my way of dealing; you may buy a morning gown now, or you may stay till they become dearer and less fashionable; but it is not my business to advise." In short, most reverend Fum, he persuaded me to buy a morning gown also, and would probably have persuaded me to have bought half the goods in his shop, if I had stayed long enough, or was furnished with sufficient money.

Upon returning home, I could not help reflecting, with some astonishment, how this very man, with such a confined education and capacity, was yet capable of turning me as he thought proper, and molding me to his inclinations. I knew he was only answering his own purposes, even while he attempted to appear solicitous about mine: yet, by a voluntary infatuation, a sort of passion, compounded of vanity and good

nature, I walked into the snare with my eyes open, and put myself to future pain in order to give him immediate pleasure. The wisdom of the ignorant somewhat resembles the instinct of animals; it is diffused in but a very narrow sphere, but within that circle it acts with vigor, uniformity, and success.—Adieu.

LETTER XXIV

To the Same

I have as yet given you but a short and imperfect description of the ladies of England. Woman, my friend, is a subject not easily understood, even in China; what, therefore, can be expected from my knowledge of the sex, in a country where they are universally allowed to be riddles, and I but a stranger?

To confess a truth, I was afraid to begin the description lest the sex should undergo some new revolution before it was finished; and my picture should thus become old before it could well be said to have ever been new. To-day they are lifted upon stilts; to-morrow they lower their heels, and raise their heads: their clothes at one time are bloated out with whalebone; at present they have laid their hoops aside, and are become as slim as mermaids. All, all is in a state of continual fluctuation, from the mandarin's wife who rattles through the street in her chariot, to the humble sempstress who clatters over the pavement in iron-shod pattens.

What chiefly distinguishes the sex at present is the train. As a lady's quality or fashion was once determined here by the circumference of her hoop, both are now measured by the length of her tail. Women of moderate fortunes are contented with tails moderately long; but ladies of true taste and distinction set no bounds to their ambition in this particular. I am told the lady mayoress, on days of ceremony, carries one longer than a bellwether of Bantam, whose tail, you know, is trundled along in a wheelbarrow.

Sun of China, what contradictions do we find in this strange world! not only the people of different countries

think in opposition to each other, but the inhabitants of a single island are often found inconsistent with themselves. Would you believe it? this very people, my Fum, who are so fond of seeing their women with long tails, at the same time dock their horses to the very rump!

But you may easily guess, that I am no ways displeased with a fashion which tends to increase a demand for the commodities of the East, and is so very beneficial to the country in which I was born. Nothing can be better calculated to increase the price of silk than the present manner of dressing. A lady's train is not bought but at some expense, and after it has swept the public walks for a very few evenings, is fit to be worn no longer: more silk must be bought in order to repair the breach, and some ladies of peculiar economy are thus found to patch up their tails eight or ten times in a season. This unnecessary consumption may introduce poverty here, but then we shall be the richer for it in China.

The Man in Black, who is a professed enemy to this manner of ornamenting the tail, assures me there are numberless inconveniences attending it, and that a lady dressed up to the fashion is as much a cripple as any in Nankin. But his chief indignation is leveled at those who dress in this manner, without a proper fortune to support it. He assures me, that he has known some who would have a tail though they wanted a petticoat; and others, who, without any other pretensions, fancied they became ladies merely from the addition of three superfluous yards of ragged silk. "I know a thrifty good woman," continues he, "who, thinking herself obliged to carry a train like her betters, never walks from home without the uneasy apprehension of wearing it out too soon: every excursion she makes gives her new anxiety; and her train is every bit as importunate, and wounds her peace as much as the bladder we sometimes see tied to the tail of a cat."

Nay, he ventures to affirm, that a train may often bring a lady into the most critical circumstances: "for, should a rude fellow," says he, "offer to come up to ravish a kiss, and the lady attempt to avoid it, in retiring she must necessarily tread upon her train, and thus fall fairly upon

her back; by which means, every one knows — her clothes may be spoiled."

The ladies here make no scruple to laugh at the smallness of a Chinese slipper; but I fancy our wives in China would have a more real cause of laughter, could they but see the immoderate length of an European train. Head of Confucius! to view a human being crippling herself with a great unwieldy tail for our diversion. Backward she cannot go, forward she must move but slowly; and if ever she attempts to turn round, it must be in a circle not smaller than that described by the wheeling crocodile, when it would face an assailant. And yet to think that all this confers importance and majesty! to think that a lady acquires additional respect from fifteen yards of trailing taffety! I cannot contain — ha! ha! ha! this is certainly a remnant of European barbarity: the female Tartar, dressed in sheep skins, is in far more convenient drapery. Their own writers have sometimes inveighed against the absurdity of this fashion; but perhaps it has never been ridiculed so well as upon the Italian theatre, where Pasquariello being engaged to attend on the Countess of Fernambroco, having one of his hands employed in carrying her muff, and the other her lapdog, he bears her train majestically along, by sticking it in the waistband of his breeches.— Adieu.

LETTER XXV

To the Same

Of all the places of amusement where gentlemen and ladies are entertained, I have not been yet to visit Newmarket. This, I am told, is a large field, where, upon certain occasions, three or four horses are brought together, then set a-running, and that horse which runs swiftest wins the wager.

This is reckoned a very polite and fashionable amusement here, much more followed by the nobility than partridge fighting at Java, or paper kites in Madagascar; several of the great here, I am told, understand as much

of farriery as their grooms; and a horse with any share of merit can never want a patron among the nobility.

We have a description of this entertainment almost every day in some of the gazettes, as for instance: "On such a day the Give and Take Plate was run for between his Grace's Crab, his Lordship's Periwinkle, and Squire Smackem's Slamerkin. All rode their own horses. There was the greatest concourse of nobility that has been known here for several seasons. The odds were in favor of Crab in the beginning; but Slamerkin, after the first heat, seemed to have the match hollow: however, it was soon seen that Periwinkle improved in wind, which at last turned out accordingly; Crab was run to a standstill, Slamerkin was knocked up, and Periwinkle was brought in with universal applause." Thus, you see, Periwinkle received universal applause, and, no doubt, his Lordship came in for some share of that praise which was so liberally bestowed upon Periwinkle. Sun of China! how glorious must the senator appear in his cap and leather breeches, his whip crossed in his mouth, and thus coming to the goal, among the shouts of grooms, jockeys, pimps, stable-bred dukes, and degraded generals!

From the description of this princely amusement now transcribed, and from the great veneration I have for the characters of its principal promoters, I make no doubt but I shall look upon a horse race with becoming reverence, predisposed as I am by a similar amusement, of which I have lately been a spectator; for just now I happened to have an opportunity of being present at a cart race.

Whether this contention between three carts of different parishes was promoted by a subscription among the nobility, or whether the grand jury, in council assembled, had gloriously combined to encourage plaustral merit, I cannot take upon me to determine; but certain it is, the whole was conducted with the utmost regularity and decorum, and the company, which made a brilliant appearance, were universally of opinion, that the sport was high, the running fine, and the riders influenced by no bribe.

It was run on the road from London to a village called Brentford, between a turnip-cart, a dust-cart, and a dung-

cart; each of the owners condescending to mount and be his own driver. The odds at starting were, Dust against Dung, five to four; but, after half a mile's going, the knowing ones found themselves all on the wrong side, and it was Turnip against the field, brass to silver.

Soon, however, the contest became more doubtful; Turnip indeed kept the way, but it was perceived that Dung had better bottom. The road re-echoed with the shouts of the spectators. "Dung against Turnip! Turnip against Dung!" was now the universal cry; neck and neck; one rode lighter, but the other had more judgment. I could not but particularly observe the ardor with which the fair sex espoused the cause of the different riders on this occasion: one was charmed with the unwashed beauties of Dung; another was captivated with the patibulary aspect of Turnip; while, in the meantime, unfortunate gloomy Dust, who came whipping behind, was cheered by the encouragement of some, and pity of all.

The contention now continued for some time, without a possibility of determining to whom victory designed the prize. The winning post appeared in view, and he who drove the turnip-cart assured himself of success; and successful he might have been, had his horse been as ambitious as he; but upon approaching a turn from the road, which led homewards, the horse fairly stood still, and refused to move a foot farther. The dung-cart had scarce time to enjoy this temporary triumph, when it was pitched headlong into a ditch by the wayside, and the rider left to wallow in congenial mud. Dust, in the meantime, soon came up, and not being far from the post, came in, amid the shouts and acclamations of all the spectators, and greatly caressed by all the quality of Brentford. Fortune was kind only to one, who ought to have been favorable to all; each had peculiar merit, each labored hard to earn the prize, and each richly deserved the cart he drove.

I do not know whether this description may not have anticipated that which I intended giving of Newmarket. I am told, there is little else to be seen even there. There may be some minute differences in the dress of the spectators, but none at all in their understandings: the quality of

Brentford are as remarkable for politeness and delicacy as the breeders of Newmarket. The quality of Brentford drive their own carts, and the honorable fraternity at Newmarket ride their own horses. In short, the matches in one place are as rational as those in the other; and it is more than probable, that turnips, dust, and dung are all that can be found to furnish out description in either.

Forgive me, my friend; but a person like me, bred up in a philosophic seclusion, is apt to regard perhaps with too much asperity those occurrences which sink man below his station in nature, and diminish the intrinsic value of humanity.—Adieu.

LETTER XXVI

From Fum Hoam to Lien Chi Altangi

You tell me the people of Europe are wise; but where lies their wisdom? You say they are valiant too; yet I have some reasons to doubt of their valor. They are engaged in war among each other, yet apply to the Russians, their neighbors and ours, for assistance. Cultivating such an alliance argues at once imprudence and timidity. All subsidies paid for such an aid, is strengthening the Russians, already too powerful, and weakening the employers, already exhausted by intestine commotions.

I cannot avoid beholding the Russian empire as the natural enemy of the more western parts of Europe; as an enemy already possessed of great strength, and, from the nature of the government, every day threatening to become more powerful. This extensive empire, which, both in Europe and Asia, occupies almost a third of the old world, was, about two centuries ago, divided into separate kingdoms and dukedoms, and, from such a division, consequently feeble. Since the times, however, of Johan Basilides it has increased its strength and extent; and those untrodden forests, those innumerable savage animals, which formerly covered the face of the country, are now removed, and colonies of mankind planted in their room. A kingdom thus enjoying peace internally, possessed of an unbounded extent of

dominion, and learning the military art at the expense of others abroad, must every day grow more powerful: and it is probable we shall hear Russia, in future times, as formerly, called the *Officina Gentium.*

It was long the wish of Peter, their great monarch, to have a fort in some of the western parts of Europe: many of his schemes and treaties were directed to this end, but, happily for Europe, he failed in them all. A fort in the power of this people would be like the possession of a floodgate; and whenever ambition, interest, or necessity prompted, they might then be able to deluge the whole western world with a barbarous inundation.

Believe me, my friend, I cannot sufficiently contemn the politicians of Europe, who thus make this powerful people arbitrators in their quarrel. The Russians are now at that period between refinement and barbarity, which seems most adapted to military achievement; and if once they happen to get footing in the western parts of Europe, it is not the feeble efforts of the sons of effeminacy and dissension that can serve to remove them. The fertile valley and soft climate will ever be sufficient inducements to draw whole myriads from their native deserts, the trackless wild, or snowy mountain.

History, experience, reason, nature, expand the book of wisdom before the eyes of mankind, but they will not read. We have seen with terror a winged phalanx of famished locusts, each singly contemptible, but from multitude become hideous, cover like clouds the face of day, and threaten the whole world with ruin. We have seen them settling on the fertile plains of India and Egypt, destroying in an instant the labors and the hopes of nations; sparing neither the fruit of the earth nor the verdure of the fields, and changing into a frightful desert landscapes of once luxuriant beauty. We have seen myriads of ants issuing together from the southern desert, like a torrent whose source was inexhaustible, succeeding each other without end, and renewing their destroyed forces with unwearied perseverance, bringing desolation wherever they came, banishing men and animals, and, when destitute of all subsistence, in heaps infecting the wilderness which they had

made! Like these have been the migrations of men. When as yet savage, and almost resembling their brute partners in the forest, subject like them only to the instincts of nature, and directed by hunger alone in the choice of an abode, how have we seen whole armies starting wild at once from their forests and their dens! Goths, Huns, Vandals, Saracens, Turks, Tartars, myriads of men, animals in human form, without country, without name, without laws, overpowering by numbers all opposition, ravaging cities, overturning empires, and, after having destroyed whole nations, and spread extensive desolation, how have we seen them sink oppressed by some new enemy more barbarous and even more unknown than they! — Adieu.

LETTER XXVII

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

AS THE instruction of the fair sex in this country is entirely committed to the care of foreigners; as their language masters, music masters, hair frizzers, and governesses, are all from abroad, I had some intentions of opening a female academy myself, and made no doubt, as I was quite a foreigner, of meeting a favorable reception.

In this I intended to instruct the ladies in all the conjugal mysteries; wives should be taught the art of managing husbands, and maids the skill of properly choosing them; I would teach a wife how far she might venture to be sick, without giving disgust; she should be acquainted with the great benefits of the cholic in the stomach, and all the thorough-bred insolence of fashion; maids should learn the secret of nicely distinguishing every competitor; they should be able to know the difference between a pedant and a scholar, a citizen and a prig, a squire and his horse, a beau and his monkey; but chiefly, they should be taught the art of managing their smiles, from the contemptuous simper to the long laborious laugh.

But I have discontinued the project; for what would signify teaching ladies the manner of governing or choosing husbands, when marriage is at present so much out of fashion, that a lady is very well off who can get any husband at all? Celibacy now prevails in every rank of life; the streets are crowded with old bachelors, and the houses with ladies who have refused good offers, and are never likely to receive any for the future.

The only advice, therefore, I could give the fair sex, as things stand at present, is to get husbands as fast as they can. There is certainly nothing in the whole creation, not even Babylon in ruins, more truly deplorable than a lady in the virgin bloom of sixty-three, or a battered unmarried beau, who squibs about from place to place, showing his pigtail wig and his ears. The one appears to my imagination in the form of a double nightcap or a roll of pomatum, the other in the shape of an electuary or a box of pills.

I would once more, therefore, advise the ladies to get husbands. I would desire them not to discard an old lover without very sufficient reasons, nor treat the new with ill-nature till they know him false; let not prudes allege the falseness of the sex, coquettes the pleasures of long courtship, or parents the necessary preliminaries of penny for penny. I have reasons that would silence even a casuist in this particular. In the first place, therefore, I divide the subject into fifteen heads, and then *sic argumentor*, ——But not to give you and myself the spleen, be contented at present with an Indian tale.

"In a winding of the river Amidar, just before it falls into the Caspian Sea, there lies an island unfrequented by the inhabitants of the continent. In this seclusion, blest with all that wild uncultivated nature could bestow, lived a princess and her two daughters. She had been wrecked upon the coast while her children as yet were infants, who, of consequence, though grown up, were entirely unacquainted with man. Yet, inexperienced as the young ladies were in the opposite sex, both early discovered symptoms, the one of prudery, the other of being a coquette. The eldest was ever learning maxims of wis-

dom and discretion from her mamma, while the youngest employed all her hours in gazing at her own face in a neighboring fountain.

"Their usual amusement in this solitude was fishing: their mother had taught them all the secrets of the art; she showed them which were the most likely places to throw out the line, what baits were most proper for the various seasons, and the best manner to draw up the finny prey, when they had hooked it. In this manner they spent their time, easy and innocent, till one day the princess, being indisposed, desired them to go and catch her a sturgeon or a shark for supper, which she fancied might set easy on her stomach. The daughters obeyed, and clapping on a gold fish, the usual bait on those occasions, went and sat upon one of the rocks, letting the gilded hook glide down with the stream.

"On the opposite shore, farther down, at the mouth of the river, lived a diver for pearls, a youth who, by long habit in his trade, was almost grown amphibious; so that he could remain whole hours at the bottom of the water, without ever fetching breath. He happened to be at that very instant diving when the ladies were fishing with the gilded hook. Seeing therefore the bait, which to him had the appearance of real gold, he was resolved to seize the prize; but both his hands being already filled with pearl oysters, he found himself obliged to snap at it with his mouth: the consequence is easily imagined; the hook, before unperceived, was instantly fastened in his jaw, nor could he, with all his efforts or his floundering, get free.

"'Sister,' cries the youngest princess, 'I have certainly caught a monstrous fish; I never perceived anything struggle so at the end of my line before; come and help me to draw it in.' They both now, therefore, assisted in fishing up the diver on shore; but nothing could equal their surprise on seeing him. 'Bless my eyes!' cries the prude, 'what have we got here? this is a very odd fish, to be sure; I never saw anything in my life look so queer: what eyes, what terrible claws, what a monstrous snout! I have read of this monster somewhere before — it certainly

must be a *tanlang*, that eats women ; let us throw it back again into the sea where we found it.'

"The diver, in the meantime, stood upon the beach at the end of the line, with the hook in his mouth, using every art that he thought could best excite pity, and particularly looking extremely tender, which is usual in such circumstances. The coquette, therefore, in some measure influenced by the innocence of his looks, ventured to contradict her companion. 'Upon my word, sister,' says she, 'I see nothing in the animal so very terrible as you are pleased to apprehend ; I think it may serve well enough for a change. Always sharks, and sturgeons, and lobsters, and crawfish, make me quite sick. I fancy a slice of this, nicely grilled, and dressed up with shrimp sauce, would be very pretty eating. I fancy mamma would like a bit with pickles above all things in the world ; and if it should not sit easy on her stomach, it will be time enough to discontinue it when found disagreeable, you know.'—'Horrid!' cries the prude; 'would the girl be poisoned? I tell you it is a *tanlang;* I have read of it in twenty places. It is everywhere described as being the most pernicious animal that ever infested the ocean. I am certain it is the most insidious ravenous creature in the world, and is certain destruction if taken internally.' The youngest sister was now therefore obliged to submit: both assisted in drawing the hook with some violence from the diver's jaw; and he, finding himself at liberty, bent his breast against the broad wave, and disappeared in an instant.

"Just at this juncture the mother came down to the beach to know the cause of her daughters' delay ; they told her every circumstance, describing the monster they had caught. The old lady was one of the most discreet women in the world ; she was called the black-eyed princess, from two black eyes she had received in her youth, being a little addicted to boxing in her liquor. 'Alas, my children,' cries she, 'what have you done! the fish you caught was a man-fish ; one of the most tame domestic animals in the world. We could have let him run and play about the garden, and he would have been twenty times more entertaining than our squirrel or monkey.'—'If that be

all,' said the young coquette, 'we will fish for him again. If that be all, I'll hold three toothpicks to one pound of snuff, I catch him whenever I please.' Accordingly they threw in their line once more, but with all their gilding, and paddling, and assiduity, they could never after catch the diver. In this state of solitude and disappointment they continued for many years, still fishing, but without success; till at last the Genius of the place, in pity to their distresses, changed the prude into a shrimp, and the coquette into an oyster."—Adieu.

LETTER XXVIII

To the Same

When the men of this country are once turned of thirty, they regularly retire every year, at proper intervals, to lie in of the spleen. The vulgar, unfurnished with the luxurious comforts of the soft cushion, down bed, and easy chair, are obliged, when the fit is on them, to nurse it up by drinking, idleness, and ill humor. In such dispositions unhappy is the foreigner who happens to cross them; his long chin, tarnished coat, or pinched hat, are sure to receive no quarter. If they meet no foreigner, however, to fight with, they are, in such cases, generally content with beating each other.

The rich, as they have more sensibility, are operated upon with greater violence by this disorder. Different from the poor, instead of becoming more insolent, they grow totally unfit for opposition. A general here, who would have faced a culverin when well, if the fit be on him, shall hardly find courage to snuff a candle. An admiral, who could have opposed a broadside without shrinking, shall sit whole days in his chamber, mobbed up in double nightcaps, shuddering at the intrusive breeze, and distinguishable from his wife only by his black beard and heavy eyebrows.

In the country this disorder mostly attacks the fair sex; in town it is most unfavorable to the men. A lady who has pined whole years amid cooing doves and complaining

nightingales, in rural retirement, shall resume all her vivacity in one night at a city gaming-table; her husband, who roared, hunted, and got drunk at home, shall grow splenetic in town in proportion to his wife's good humor. Upon their arrival in London, they exchange their disorders. In consequence of her parties and excursions, he puts on the furred cap and scarlet stomacher, and perfectly resembles an Indian husband, who, when his wife is safely delivered, permits her to transact business abroad, while he undergoes all the formality of keeping his bed, and receiving all the condolence in her place.

But those who reside constantly in town, owe this disorder mostly to the influence of the weather. It is impossible to describe what a variety of transmutations an east wind shall produce; it has been known to change a lady of fashion into a parlor couch; an alderman into a plate of custards; and a dispenser of justice into a rat-trap. Even philosophers themselves are not exempt from its influence; it has often converted a poet into a coral and bells, and a patriot senator into a dumb waiter.

Some days ago I went to visit the Man in Black, and entered his house with that cheerfulness which the certainty of a favorable reception always inspires. Upon opening the door of his apartment, I found him with the most rueful face imaginable, in a morning gown and flannel nightcap, earnestly employed in learning to blow the German flute. Struck with the absurdity of a man in the decline of life thus blowing away all his constitution and spirits, even without the consolation of being musical, I ventured to ask what could induce him to attempt learning so difficult an instrument so late in life? To this he made no reply, but groaning, and still holding the flute to his lips, continued to gaze at me for some moments very angrily, and then proceeded to practice his gamut as before. After having produced a variety of the most hideous tones in nature, at last turning to me, he demanded, whether I did not think he had made a surprising progress in two days? "You see," continues he, "I have got the *ambusheer* already; and as for fingering, my master tells me, I shall have that in a few lessons more." I was so much astonished with this

instance of inverted ambition, that I knew not what to reply; but soon discerned the cause of all his absurdities: my friend was under a metamorphosis by the power of spleen, and flute-blowing was unluckily become his adventitious passion.

In order, therefore, to banish his anxiety imperceptibly, by seeming to indulge it, I began to descant on those gloomy topics by which philosophers often get rid of their own spleen, by communicating it: the wretchedness of a man in this life; the happiness of some wrought out of the miseries of others; the necessity that wretches should expire under punishment, that rogues might enjoy affluence in tranquillity: I led him on from the inhumanity of the rich to the ingratitude of the beggar; from the insincerity of refinement to the fierceness of rusticity; and at last had the good fortune to restore him to his usual serenity of temper, by permitting him to expatiate upon all the modes of human misery.

"Some nights ago," says my friend, "sitting alone by my fire, I happened to look into an account of the detection of a set of men called the thief-takers. I read over the many hideous cruelties of those haters of mankind, of their pretended friendship to wretches they meant to betray, of their sending men out to rob, and then hanging them. I could not avoid sometimes interrupting the narrative, by crying out, 'Yet these are men!' As I went on, I was informed that they had lived by this practice several years, and had been enriched by the price of blood: 'And yet,' cried I, 'I have been sent into this world, and am desired to call these men my brothers!' I read that the very man who led the condemned wretch to the gallows, was he who falsely swore his life away: 'And yet,' continued I, 'that perjurer had just such a nose, such lips, such hands, and such eyes, as Newton.' I at last came to the account of the wretch that was searched after robbing one of the thief-takers of half-a-crown. Those of the confederacy knew that he had got but that single half-crown in the world; after a long search, therefore, which they knew would be fruitless, and taking from him the half-crown, which they knew was all he had, one of the gang compassionately cried out, 'Alas! poor crea-

ture, let him keep all the rest he has got; it will do him service in Newgate, where we are sending him.' This was an instance of such complicated guilt and hypocrisy, that I threw down the book in an agony of rage, and began to think with malice of all the human kind. I sat silent for some minutes, and soon perceiving the ticking of my watch beginning to grow noisy and troublesome, I quickly placed it out of hearing, and strove to resume my serenity. But the watchman soon gave me a second alarm. I had scarcely recovered from this, when my peace was assaulted by the wind at my window; and when that ceased to blow, I listened for death-watches in the wainscot. I now found my whole system discomposed. I strove to find a resource in philosophy and reason; but what could I oppose, or where direct my blow, when I could see no enemy to combat? I saw no misery approaching, nor knew any I had to fear, yet still I was miserable. Morning came; I sought for tranquillity in dissipation, sauntered from one place of public resort to another, but found myself disagreeable to my acquaintance, and ridiculous to others. I tried at different times dancing, fencing, and riding; I solved geometrical problems, shaped tobacco-stoppers, wrote verses, and cut paper. At last I placed my affections on music, and find, that earnest employment, if it cannot cure, at least will palliate every anxiety."—Adieu.

LETTER XXIX

From Lien Chi Altangi to Hingpo at Moscow

Your misfortunes are mine; but, as every period of life is marked with its own, you must learn to endure them. Disappointed love makes the misery of youth; disappointed ambition, that of manhood; and successless avarice, that of age. These three attack us through life; and it is our duty to stand upon our guard. To love we ought to oppose dissipation, and endeavor to change the object of the affections; to ambition, the happiness of indolence and obscurity; and to avarice, the fear of soon dying.

These are the shields with which we should arm ourselves; and thus make every scene of life, if not pleasing, at least supportable.

Men complain of not finding a place of repose. They are in the wrong: they have it for seeking. What they should indeed complain of, is that the heart is an enemy to that very repose they seek. To themselves alone should they impute their discontent. They seek within the short span of life to satisfy a thousand desires, each of which alone is insatiable. One month passes, and another comes on; the year ends, and then begins; but man is still unchanging in folly, still blindly continuing in prejudice. To the wise man every climate and every soil is pleasing; to him a parterre of flowers is the famous valley of gold; to him a little brook the fountain of the young peach trees; to such a man the melody of birds is more ravishing than the harmony of a full concert; and the tincture of the cloud preferable to the touch of the finest pencil.

The life of man is a journey; a journey that must be traveled, however bad the roads or the accommodation. If in the beginning it is found dangerous, narrow, and difficult, it must either grow better in the end, or we shall by custom learn to bear its inequality.

But, though I see you incapable of penetrating into grand principles, attend at least to a simile, adapted to every apprehension. I am mounted upon a wretched ass, I see another man before me upon a sprightly horse, at which I find some uneasiness. I look behind me and see numbers on foot, stooping under heavy burdens; let me learn to pity their estate, and thank Heaven for my own.

Shingfu, when under misfortunes, would in the beginning weep like a child; but he soon recovered his former tranquillity. After indulging grief for a few days, he would become, as usual, the most merry old man in all the province of Shansi. About the time that his wife died, his possessions were all consumed by fire, and his only son sold into captivity; Shingfu grieved for one day, and the next went to dance at a mandarin's door for his dinner. The company were surprised to see the old man so merry, when suffering such great losses; and the mandarin himself

coming out, asked him, how he, who had grieved so much and given way to calamity the day before, could now be so cheerful? "You ask me one question," cries the old man; "let me answer by asking another: Which is the most durable, a hard thing, or a soft thing; that which resists, or that which makes no resistance?"—"A hard thing, to be sure," replied the mandarin. "There you are wrong," returned Shingfu. "I am now four score years old; and, if you look in my mouth, you will find that I have lost all my teeth, but not a bit of my tongue."—Adieu.

LETTER XXX

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

THE manner of grieving for our departed friends in China is very different from that of Europe. The mourning color of Europe is black; that of China white. When a parent or relation dies here — for they seldom mourn for friends — it is only clapping on a suit of sables, grimacing it for a few days, and all, soon forgotten, goes on as before; not a single creature missing the deceased, except perhaps a favorite housekeeper or favorite cat.

On the contrary, with us in China it is a very serious affair. The piety with which I have seen you behave on one of these occasions, should never be forgotten. I remember it was upon the death of thy grandmother's maiden sister. The coffin was exposed in the principal hall, in public view. Before it were placed the figures of eunuchs, horses, tortoises, and other animals, in attitudes of grief and respect. The more distant relations of the old lady, and I among the number, came to pay our compliments of condolence, and to salute the deceased after the manner of our country. We had scarce presented our wax candles and perfumes, and given the howl of departure, when, crawling on his belly from under a curtain, out came the

reverend Fum Hoam himself, in all the dismal solemnity of distress. Your looks were set for sorrow; your clothing consisted in a hempen bag tied round the neck with a string. For two long months did this mourning continue. By night you lay stretched on a single mat, and sat on the stool of discontent by day. Pious man! who could thus set an example of sorrow and decorum to our country. Pious country! where, if we do not grieve at the departure of our friends for their sakes, at least we are taught to regret them for our own.

All is very different here; amazement all! What sort of people am I got amongst? Fum, thou son of Fo, what sort of people am I got amongst? No crawling round the coffin; no dressing up in hempen bags; no lying on mats, or sitting on stools! Gentlemen here shall put on first mourning with as sprightly an air as if preparing for a birthnight; and widows shall actually dress for another husband in their weeds for the former. The best jest of all is, that our merry mourners clap bits of muslin on their sleeves, and these are called WEEPERS, weeping muslin! alas, alas, very sorrowful truly! These weepers, then it seems, are to bear the whole burden of the distress.

But I have had the strongest instance of this contrast, this tragi-comical behavior in distress, upon a recent occasion. Their king, whose departure though sudden was not unexpected, died after a reign of many years. His age and uncertain state of health served, in some measure, to diminish the sorrow of his subjects; and their expectations from his successor seemed to balance their minds between uneasiness and satisfaction. But how ought they to have behaved on such an occasion? Surely they ought rather to have endeavored to testify their GRATITUDE to their deceased friend, than to proclaim their HOPES of the future! Sure, even the successor must suppose their love to wear the face of adulation, which so quickly changed the object! However, the very same day on which the old king died they made rejoicings for the new.

For my part, I have no conception of this new manner of mourning and rejoicing in a breath; of being merry and sad; of mixing a funeral procession with a jig and a bon-

fire. At least, it would have been just, that they who flattered the king while living for virtues which he had not should lament him dead for those he really had.

In this universal cause for national distress, as I had no interest myself, so it is but natural to suppose I felt no real affliction. "In all the losses of our friends," says an European philosopher, "we first consider how much our own welfare is affected by their departure, and moderate our real grief just in the same proportion." Now, as I had neither received, nor expected to receive, favors from kings or their flatterers; as I had no acquaintance in particular with their late monarch as I know that the place of a king is soon supplied; and as the Chinese proverb has it, that though the world may sometimes want cobblers to mend their shoes, there is no danger of its wanting emperors to rule their kingdoms: from such considerations, I could bear the loss of a king with the most philosophic resignation. However, I thought it my duty at least to appear sorrowful, to put on a melancholy aspect, or to set my face by that of the people.

The first company I came amongst, after the news became general, was a set of jolly companions, who were drinking prosperity to the ensuing reign. I entered the room with looks of despair, and even expected applause for the superlative misery of my countenance. Instead of that, I was universally condemned by the company for a grimacing son of a whore, and desired to take away my penitential phiz to some other quarter. I now corrected my former mistake, and, with the most sprightly air imaginable, entered a company where they were talking over the ceremonies of the approaching funeral. Here I sat for some time with an air of pert vivacity; when one of the chief mourners immediately observing my good humor, desired me, if I pleased, to go and grin somewhere else; they wanted no disaffected scoundrels there. Leaving this company, therefore, I was resolved to assume a look perfectly neutral; and have ever since been studying the fashionable air; something between jest and earnest: a complete virginity of face, uncontaminated with the smallest symptom of meaning.

But though grief be a very slight affair here, the mourning, my friend, is a very important concern. When an

emperor dies in China, the whole expense of the solemnities is defrayed from the royal coffers. When the great die here, mandarins are ready enough to order mourning; but I do not see they are so ready to pay for it. If they send me down from court the gray undress frock, or the black coat without pocket-holes, I am willing enough to comply with their commands, and wear both; but, by the head of Confucius! to be obliged to wear black, and buy it into the bargain, is more than my tranquillity of temper can bear. What! order me to wear mourning before they know whether I can buy it or no! Fum, thou son of Fo, what sort of a people am I got amongst, where being out of black is a certain symptom of poverty, where those who have miserable faces cannot have mourning, and those who have mourning will not wear a miserable face!

LETTER XXXI

To the Same

I had some intentions lately of going to visit Bedlam, the place where those who go mad are confined. I went to wait upon the Man in Black to be my conductor, but I found him preparing to go to Westminster Hall, where the English hold their courts of justice. It gave me some surprise to find my friend engaged in a lawsuit, but more so when he informed me that it had been depending for several years. "How is it possible," cried I, "for a man who knows the world to go to law? I am well acquainted with the courts of justice in China: they resemble rat-traps every one of them; nothing more easy than to get in, but to get out again is attended with some difficulty, and more cunning than rats are generally found to possess!"

"Faith," replied my friend, "I should not have gone to law but that I was assured of success before I began; things were presented to me in so alluring a light, that I thought by barely declaring myself a candidate for the prize, I had nothing more to do but to enjoy the fruits of

the victory. Thus have I been upon the eve of an imaginary triumph every term these ten years; have traveled forward with victory ever in my view, but ever out of reach; however, at present I fancy we have hampered our antagonist in such a manner, that, without some unforeseen demur, we shall this very day lay him fairly on his back."

"If things be so situated," said I, "I don't care if I attend you to the courts, and partake in the pleasure of your success. But prithee," continued I, as we set forward, "what reasons have you to think an affair at last concluded, which has given you so many former disappointments?" — "My lawyer tells me," returned he, "that I have Salkeld and Ventris strong in my favor, and that there are no less than fifteen cases in point." — "I understand," said I; "those are two of your judges who have already declared their opinions." — "Pardon me," replied my friend, "Salkeld and Ventris are lawyers who some hundred years ago gave their opinions on cases similar to mine: these opinions which make for me, my lawyer is to cite; and those opinions which look another way are cited by the lawyer employed by my antagonist: as I observed, I have Salkeld and Ventris for me; he has Coke and Hale for him; and he that has most opinions is most likely to carry his cause." — "But where is the necessity," cried I, "of prolonging a suit by citing the opinions and reports of others, since the same good sense which determined lawyers in former ages, may serve to guide your judges at this day? They at that time gave their opinions only from the light of reason; your judges have the same light at present to direct them; let me even add, a greater, as in former ages there were many prejudices from which the present is happily free. If arguing from authorities be exploded from every other branch of learning, why should it be particularly adhered to in this? I plainly foresee how such a method of investigation must embarrass every suit, and even perplex the student; ceremonies will be multiplied, formalities must increase, and more time will thus be spent in learning the arts of litigation, than in the discovery of right."

"I see," cries my friend, "that you are for a speedy administration of justice; but all the world will grant, that the more time that is taken up in considering any subject, the better it will be understood. Besides, it is the boast of an Englishman, that his property is secure, and all the world will grant, that a deliberate administration of justice is the best way to secure his property. Why have we so many lawyers, but to secure our property? Why so many formalities, but to secure our property? Not less than one hundred thousand families live in opulence, elegance, and ease, merely by securing our property."

"To embarrass justice," returned I, "by a multiplicity of laws, or to hazard it by a confidence in our judges, are, I grant, the opposite rocks on which legislative wisdom has ever split. In one case, the client resembles that emperor who is said to have been suffocated with the bedclothes which were only designed to keep him warm; in the other, to that town which let the enemy take possession of its walls, in order to show the world how little they depended upon aught but courage for safety. But, bless me! what numbers do I see here — all in black! — how is it possible that half this multitude can find employment?" — "Nothing so easily conceived," returned my companion; "they live by watching each other. For instance, the catchpole watches the man in debt, the attorney watches the catchpole, the counselor watches the attorney, the solicitor the counselor, and all find sufficient employment." — "I conceive you," interrupted I; "they watch each other, but it is the client that pays them all for watching: it puts me in mind of a Chinese fable, which is entitled, "Five Animals at a Meal."

"A grasshopper, filled with dew, was merrily singing under a shade; a whangam, that eats grasshoppers, had marked it for its prey, and was just stretching forth to devour it; a serpent, that had for a long time fed only on whangams, was coiled up to fasten on the whangam; a yellow bird was just upon the wing to dart upon the serpent; a hawk had just stooped from above to seize the yellow bird; all were intent on their prey, and unmindful of their danger; so the whangam ate the grasshopper, the serpent

ate the whangam, the yellow bird the serpent, and the hawk the yellow bird; when, sousing from on high, a vulture gobbled up the hawk, grasshopper, whangam, and all in a moment."

I had scarcely finished my fable, when the lawyer came to inform my friend that his cause was put off till another term, that money was wanting to retain, and that all the world was of opinion that the very next hearing would bring him off victorious. "If so, then," cries my friend, "I believe it will be my wisest way to continue the cause for another term; and, in the meantime, my friend here and I will go and see Bedlam."— Adieu.

LETTER XXXII

To the Same

I LATELY received a visit from the little Beau, who I found had assumed a new flow of spirits with a new suit of clothes. Our discourse happened to turn upon the different treatment of the fair sex here and in Asia, with the influence of beauty in refining our manners, and improving our conversation.

I soon perceived he was strongly prejudiced in favor of the Asiatic method of treating the sex, and that it was impossible to persuade him, but that a man was happier who had four wives at his command, than he who had only one. "It is true," cries he, "your men of fashion in the East are slaves, and under some terrors of having their throats squeezed by a bowstring; but what then? they can find ample consolation in a seraglio; they make, indeed, an indifferent figure in conversation abroad, but then they have a seraglio to console them at home. I am told they have no balls, drums, nor operas, but then they have got a seraglio; they may be deprived of wine and French cookery, but they have a seraglio: a seraglio — a seraglio, my dear creature, wipes off every inconvenience in the world!

"Besides, I am told your Asiatic beauties are the most convenient women alive; for they have no souls: positively

there is nothing in nature I should like so much as ladies without souls; soul here, is the utter ruin of half the sex. A girl of eighteen shall have soul enough to spend a hundred pounds in the turning of a trump; her mother shall have soul enough to ride a sweepstake match at a horse race; her maiden aunt shall have soul enough to purchase the furniture of a whole toy-shop; and others shall have soul enough to behave as if they had no souls at all."

"With respect to the soul," interrupted I, "the Asiatics are much kinder to the fair sex than you imagine: instead of one soul, Fohi, the idol of China, gives every woman three; the Brahmins give them fifteen; and even Mahomet himself nowhere excludes the sex from Paradise. Abulfeda reports, that an old woman one day importuning him to know what she ought to do in order to gain Paradise —'My good lady,' answered the prophet, 'old women never get there. —'What! never get to Paradise?' returned the matron, in a fury. 'Never,' says he; 'for they always grow young by the way.' No, sir," continued I; "the men of Asia behave with more deference to the sex than you seem to imagine. As you of Europe say grace upon sitting down to dinner, so it is the custom in China to say grace when a man goes to bed to his wife." —"And may I die," returned my companion, "but it is a very pretty ceremony; for, seriously, sir, I see no reason why a man should not be as grateful in one situation as in the other. Upon honor, I always find myself much more disposed to gratitude on the couch of a fine woman, than upon sitting down to a sirloin of beef."

"Another ceremony," said I, resuming the conversation, "in favor of the sex, among us, is the bride's being allowed after marriage HER THREE DAYS OF FREEDOM. During this interval a thousand extravagances are practiced by either sex. The lady is placed upon the nuptial bed, and numberless monkey tricks are played round to divert her. One gentleman smells her perfumed handkerchief, another attempts to untie her garters, a third pulls off her shoe to play hunt the slipper, another pretends to be an idiot, and endeavors to raise a laugh by grimacing; in the meantime the glass goes briskly about, till ladies, gentlemen, wife,

husband, and all, are mixed together in one inundation of arrack punch."

"Strike me dumb, deaf, and blind," cried my companion, "but that's very pretty! there's some sense in your Chinese ladies' condescensions; but among us, you shall scarce find one of the whole sex that shall hold her good humor for three days together. No later than yesterday, I happened to say some civil things to a citizen's wife of my acquaintance, not because I loved her, but because I had charity; and what do you think was the tender creature's reply? Only that she detested my pigtail wig, high-heeled shoes, and sallow complexion! That is all! Nothing more! — Yes, by the Heavens, though she was more ugly, than an unpainted actress, I found her more insolent than a thoroughbred woman of quality!"

He was proceeding in this wild manner, when his invective was interrupted by the Man in Black, who entered the apartment, introducing his niece, a young lady of exquisite beauty. Her very appearance was sufficient to silence the severest satirist of the sex; easy without pride, and free without impudence, she seemed capable of supplying every sense with pleasure. Her looks, her conversation, were natural and unconstrained; she had neither been taught to languish nor ogle, to laugh without a jest, or sigh without sorrow. I found that she had just returned from abroad, and had been conversant in the manners of the world. Curiosity prompted me to ask several questions, but she declined them all. I own I never found myself so strongly prejudiced in favor of apparent merit before, and could willingly have prolonged our conversation; but the company after some time withdrew. Just, however, before the little Beau took his leave, he called me aside, and requested I would change him a twenty pound bill; which as I was incapable of doing, he was contented with borrowing half-a-crown. — Adieu.

LETTER XXXIII

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

OUR scholars in China have a most profound veneration for forms. A first-rate beauty never studied the decorums of dress with more assiduity; they may properly enough be said to be clothed with wisdom from head to foot: they have their philosophical caps, and philosophical whiskers; their philosophical slippers, and philosophical fans; there is even a philosophical standard for measuring the nails; and yet, with all this seeming wisdom, they are often found to be mere empty pretenders.

A philosophical beau is not so frequent in Europe; yet I am told that such characters are found here. I mean such as punctually support all the decorums of learning without being really very profound, or naturally possessed of a fine understanding; who labor hard to obtain the titular honors attending literary merit, who flatter others in order to be flattered in turn, and only study to be thought students.

A character of this kind generally receives company in his study, in all the pensive formality of slippers, night-gown, and easy chair. The table is covered with a large book, which is always kept open, and never read; his solitary hours being dedicated to dozing, mending pens, feeling his pulse, peeping through the microscope, and sometimes reading amusing books, which he condemns in company. His library is preserved with the most religious neatness, and is generally a repository of scarce books, which bear a high price, because too dull or useless to become common by the ordinary methods of publication.

Such men are generally candidates for admittance into literary clubs, academies, and institutions, where they regularly meet to give and receive a little instruction, and a great deal of praise. In conversation they never betray ignorance, because they never seem to receive information.

Offer a new observation, they have heard it before; pinch them in argument, and they reply with a sneer.

Yet, how trifling soever these little arts may appear, they answer one valuable purpose,— of gaining the practisers the esteem they wish for. The bounds of a man's knowledge are easily concealed, if he has but prudence; but all can readily see and admire a gilt library, a set of long nails, a silver standish, or a well-combed whisker, who are incapable of distinguishing a dunce.

When Father Matthew, the first European missionary, entered China, the court was informed that he possessed great skill in astronomy; he was therefore sent for, and examined. The established astronomers of state undertook this task, and made their report to the Emperor that his skill was but very superficial, and no way comparable to their own. The missionary, however, appealed from their judgment to experience, and challenged them to calculate an eclipse of the moon that was to happen a few nights following. "What!" said some, "shall a barbarian without nails pretend to vie with men in astronomy who have made it the study of their lives; with men who know half the knowable characters of words, who wear scientifical caps and slippers, and who have gone through every literary degree with applause?" They accepted the challenge, confident of success. The eclipse began: the Chinese produced a most splendid apparatus, and were fifteen minutes wrong; the missionary, with a single instrument, was exact to a second. This was convincing: but the court astronomers were not to be convinced; instead of acknowledging their error, they assured the Emperor that their calculations were certainly exact, but that the stranger without nails had actually bewitched the moon. "Well, then," cries the good Emperor, smiling at their ignorance, "you shall still continue to be servants of the moon, but I constitute this man her controller."

China is thus replete with men whose only pretensions to knowledge arise from external circumstances; and in Europe every country abounds with them in proportion to its ignorance. Spain and Flanders, who are behind the rest of Europe in learning at least three centuries, have twenty

literary titles and marks of distinction unknown in France or England. They have their *Clarissimi* and *Præclarissimi*, their *Accuratissimi* and *Minutissimi*. A round cap entitles one student to argue, and a square cap permits another to teach, while a cap with a tassel almost sanctifies the head it happens to cover. But where true knowledge is cultivated, these formalities begin to disappear. The ermine cowl, the solemn beard, and sweeping train, are laid aside; philosophers dress, and talk, and think, like other men; and lamb-skin dressers, and cap-makers, and tail-carriers, now deplore a literary age.

For my own part, my friend, I have seen enough of presuming ignorance, never to venerate wisdom but where it actually appears. I have received literary titles and distinctions myself; and, by the quantity of my own wisdom, know how very little wisdom they can confer.— Adieu.

LETTER XXXIV

To the Same

The time for the young king's coronation approaches. The great and the little world look forward with impatience. A knight from the country, who has brought up his family to see and be seen on this occasion, has taken all the lower part of the house where I lodge. His wife is laying in a large quantity of silks, which the mercer tells her are to be fashionable next season; and miss, her daughter, has actually had her ears bored previous to the ceremony. In all this bustle of preparation, I am considered as mere lumber, and have been shoved up two stories higher, to make room for others my landlady seems perfectly convinced are my betters; but whom, before me, she is contented with only calling very good company.

The little Beau, who has now forced himself into my intimacy, was yesterday giving me a most minute detail of the intended procession. All men are eloquent upon their favorite topic; and this seemed peculiarly adapted to the size and turn of his understanding. His whole mind was

blazoned over with a variety of glittering images,— coronets, escutcheons, lace, fringe, tassels, stones, bugles, and spun glass. "Here," cried he, "Garter is to walk; and there Rouge Dragon marches with the escutcheons on his back. Here Clarencieux moves forward; and there Blue Mantle disdains to be left behind. Here the Aldermen march two and two; and there the undaunted Champion of England, no way terrified at the very numerous appearance of gentlemen and ladies, rides forward in complete armor, and with an intrepid air throws down his glove. Ah!" continued he, "should any be so hardy as to take up that fatal glove, and so accept the challenge, we should see fine sport; the champion would show him no mercy; he would soon teach him all his passes, with a witness. However, I am afraid we shall have none willing to try it with him upon the approaching occasion, for two reasons, — first, because his antagonist would stand a chance of being killed in the single combat; and, secondly, because if he escapes the champion's arm, he would certainly be hanged for treason. No, no; I fancy none will be so hardy as to dispute it with a champion like him, inured to arms; and we shall probably see him prancing unmolested away, holding his bridle thus in one hand, and brandishing his dram-cup in the other."

Some men have a manner of describing which only wraps the subject in more than former obscurity; thus I was unable, with all my companion's volubility, to form a distinct idea of the intended procession. I was certain that the inauguration of a king should be conducted with solemnity and religious awe; and I could not be persuaded that there was much solemnity in this description. "If this be true," cried I to myself, "the people of Europe surely have a strange manner of mixing solemn and fantastic images together; pictures at once replete with burlesque and the sublime. At a time when the king enters into the most solemn compact with his people, nothing surely should be admitted to diminish from the real majesty of the ceremony. A ludicrous image brought in at such a time throws an air of ridicule upon the whole. It someway resembles a picture I have seen, designed by Albert

Durer, where, amid all the solemnity of that awful scene, a deity judging, and a trembling world awaiting the decree, he has introduced a merry mortal trundling a scolding wife to hell in a wheelbarrow."

My companion, who mistook my silence, during this interval of reflection, for the rapture of astonishment, proceeded to describe those frivolous parts of the show that most struck his imagination; and to assure me, that if I stayed in this country some months longer, I should see fine things. "For my own part," continued he, "I know already of fifteen suits of clothes that would stand on one end with gold lace, all designed to be first shown there; and as for diamonds, rubies, emeralds, and pearls, we shall see them as thick as brass nails in a sedan chair. And then we are all to walk so majestically, thus; this foot always behind the foot before. The ladies are to fling nosegays; the court poets to scatter verses; the spectators are to be all in full dress; Mrs. Tibbs in a new sack, ruffles, and Frenched hair: look where you will, one thing finer than another; Mrs. Tibbs courtesies to the Duchess; her Grace returns the compliment with a bow. 'Largess!' cries the herald. 'Make room!' cries the gentleman usher. 'Knock him down!' cries the guard. Ah!" continued he, amazed at his own description, "what an astonishing scene of grandeur can art produce from the smallest circumstance, when it thus actually turns to wonder one man putting on another man's hat!"

I now found his mind was entirely set upon the fopperies of the pageant, and quite regardless of the real meaning of such costly preparations. "Pageants," says Bacon, "are pretty things; but we should rather study to make them elegant than expensive." Processions, cavalcades, and all that fund of gay frippery furnished out by tailors, barbers, and tirewomen, mechanically influence the mind into veneration. An emperor in his nightcap would not meet with half the respect of an emperor with a glittering crown. Politics resemble religion; attempting to divest either of ceremony is the most certain method of bringing either into contempt. The weak must have their inducements to admiration as well as the wise; and it is the business of a

sensible government to impress all ranks with a sense of subordination, whether this be effected by a diamond buckle or a virtuous edict, a sumptuary law or a glass necklace.

This interval of reflection only gave my companion spirits to begin his description afresh; and, as a greater inducement to raise my curiosity, he informed me of the vast sums that were given by the spectators for places. "That the ceremony must be fine," cries he, "is very evident from the fine price that is paid for seeing it. Several ladies have assured me, they would willingly part with one eye rather than be prevented from looking on with the other. Come, come," continues he, "I have a friend, who, for my sake, will supply us with places at the most reasonable rates; I'll take care you shall not be imposed upon; and he will inform you of the use, finery, rapture, splendor, and enchantment of the whole ceremony, better than I."

Follies often repeated lose their absurdity, and assume the appearance of reason. His arguments were so often and so strongly enforced, that I had actually some thoughts of becoming a spectator. We accordingly went together to bespeak a place; but guess my surprise when the man demanded a purse of gold for a single seat! I could hardly believe him serious upon making the demand. "Prithee, friend," cried I, "after I have paid twenty pounds for sitting here an hour or two, can I bring a part of the coronation back?" — "No, sir." — "How long can I live upon it, after I have come away?" — "Not long, sir." — "Can a coronation clothe, feed, or fatten me?" — "Sir," replied the man, "you seem to be under a mistake; all that you can bring away is the pleasure of having it to say, that you saw the coronation." — "Blast me!" cries Tibbs, "if that be all, there is no need of paying for that; since I am resolved to have that pleasure, whether I am there or no!"

I am conscious, my friend, that this is but a very confused description of the intended ceremony. You may object, that I neither settle rank, precedency, nor place; that I seem ignorant whether Gules walks before or behind Garter; that I have neither mentioned the dimensions of a lord's cap, nor measured the length of a lady's tail. I know your delight is in minute description: and this I am

unhappily disqualified from furnishing ; yet, upon the whole, I fancy it will be no way comparable to the magnificence of our late Emperor Whangti's procession, when he was married to the moon, at which Fum Hoam himself presided in person.— Adieu.

LETTER XXXV

To the Same

THERE are numberless employments in the courts of the Eastern monarchs utterly unpractised and unknown in Europe. They have no such officers, for instance, as the emperor's ear-tickler or tooth-picker ; they have never introduced at the courts the mandarin appointed to bear the royal tobacco-box, or the grave director of the imperial exercitations in the seraglio. Yet I am surprised that the English have imitated us in none of these particulars, as they are generally pleased with everything that comes from China, and excessively fond of creating new and useless employments. They have filled their houses with our furniture, their public gardens with our fireworks, and their very ponds with our fish. Our courtiers, my friend, are the fish and the furniture they should have imported ; our courtiers would fill up the necessary ceremonies of a court better than those of Europe ; would be contented with receiving large salaries for doing little ; whereas some of this country are at present discontented, though they receive large salaries for doing nothing.

I lately, therefore, had thoughts of publishing a proposal here, for the admission of some new Eastern offices and titles into their Court Register. As I consider myself in the light of a cosmopolite, I find as much satisfaction in scheming for the countries in which I happen to reside, as for that in which I was born.

The finest apartments in the palace of Pegu are frequently infested with rats. These the religion of the country strictly forbids the people to kill. In such circumstances, therefore, they are obliged to have recourse to some great

man of the court, who is willing to free the royal apartment even at the hazard of his salvation. After a weak monarch's reign, the quantity of court vermin in every part of the palace is surprising; but a prudent king, and a vigilant officer, soon drive them from their sanctuaries behind the mats and tapestry, and effectually free the court. Such an officer in England would, in my opinion, be serviceable at this juncture; for if, as I am told, the palace be old, much vermin must undoubtedly have taken refuge behind the wainscot and hangings. A minister should therefore be invested with the title and dignities of court vermin-killer; he should have full power either to banish, take, poison, or destroy them, with enchantments, traps, ferrets, or ratsbane. He might be permitted to brandish his besom without remorse, and brush down every part of the furniture, without sparing a single cobweb, however sacred by long prescription. I communicated this proposal some days ago in a company of the first distinction, and enjoying the most honorable offices of the state. Among the number were the inspector of Great Britain, Mr. Henriquez the director of the ministry, Ben. Victor the treasurer, John Lockman the secretary, and the conductor of the "Imperial Magazine." They all acquiesced in the utility of my proposal, but were apprehensive it might meet with some obstruction from court upholsterers and chambermaids, who would object to it from the demolition of the furniture, and the dangerous use of ferrets and ratsbane.

My next proposal is rather more general than the former, and might probably meet with less opposition. Though no people in the world flatter each other more than the English, I know none who understand the art less, and flatter with such little refinement. Their panegyric, like a Tartar feast, is indeed served up with profusion, but their cookery is insupportable. A client here shall dress up a fricassee for his patron, that shall offend an ordinary nose before it enters the room. A town shall send up their address to a great minister, which shall prove at once a satire on the minister and themselves. If the favorite of the day sits, or stands, or sleeps, there are poets to put it into verse, and priests to preach it in the pulpit. In order, therefore, to

free both those who praise and those who are praised from a duty probably disagreeable to both, I would constitute professed flatterers here, as in several courts of India. These are appointed in the courts of their princes, to instruct the people where to exclaim admiration, and where to lay an emphasis of praise. But an officer of this kind is always in waiting when the emperor converses in a familiar manner among his rajahs and other nobility. At every sentence, when the monarch pauses, and smiles at what he has been saying, the Karamatman, as this officer is called, is to take it for granted that his majesty has said a good thing. Upon which he cries out — "Karamat! Karamat! — a miracle! a miracle!" and throws up his hands and his eyes in ecstasy. This is echoed by the courtiers around, while the emperor sits all this time in sullen satisfaction, enjoying the triumph of his joke, or studying a new repartee.

I would have such an officer placed at every great man's table in England. By frequent practice he might soon become a perfect master of the art, and in time would turn out pleasing to his patron, no way troublesome to himself, and might prevent the nauseous attempts of many more ignorant pretenders. The clergy here, I am convinced, would relish this proposal. It would provide places for several of them. And, indeed, by some of their late productions many appear to have qualified themselves as candidates for this office already.

But my last proposal I take to be of the utmost importance. Our neighbor, the empress of Russia, has, you may remember, instituted an order of female knighthood; the empress of Germany has also instituted another; the Chinese have had such an order time immemorial. I am amazed the English have never come into such an institution. When I consider what kind of men are made knights here, it appears strange that they never conferred this honor upon women. They make cheesemongers and pastrycooks knights; then, why not their wives? They have called up tallow chandlers to maintain the hardy profession of chivalry and arms; then, why not their wives? Haberdashers are sworn, as I suppose all knights must be sworn,

NEVER TO FLY IN TIME OF MELLAY OR BATTLE, TO MAINTAIN AND UPHOLD THE NOBLE ESTATE OF CHIVALRY, WITH HORSE, HARNISHE, AND OTHER KNIGHTLYE HABILIMENTS. Haberdashers, I say, are sworn to all this; then, why not their wives? Certain I am, their wives understand fighting and feats of mellay and battle better than they; and as for knightlye horse and harnishe, it is probable both know nothing more than the harness of a one-horse chaise. No, no, my friend, instead of conferring any order upon the husbands, I would knight their wives. However, the state should not be troubled with a new institution upon this occasion. Some ancient exploded order might be revived, which would furnish both a motto and a name,— the ladies might be permitted to choose for themselves. There are, for instance, the obsolete orders of the Dragon in Germany, of the Rue in Scotland, and the Porcupine in France,— all well-sounding names, and very applicable to my intended female institution. — Adieu.

LETTER XXXVI

To the Same

THE English are at present employed in celebrating a feast, which becomes general every seventh year; the parliament of the nation being then dissolved, and another appointed to be chosen. This solemnity falls infinitely short of our Feast of the Lanterns in magnificence and splendor; it is also surpassed by others of the East in unanimity and pure devotion; but no festival in the world can compare with it for eating. Their eating, indeed, amazes me; had I five hundred heads, and were each head furnished with brains, yet would they all be insufficient to compute the number of cows, pigs, geese, and turkeys, which, upon this occasion, die for the good of their country.

To say the truth, eating seems to make a grand ingredient in all English parties of zeal, business, or amusement. When a church is to be built, or an hospital endowed, the directors assemble, and instead of consulting

upon it, they eat upon it, by which means the business goes forward with success. When the poor are to be relieved, the officers appointed to dole out public charity assemble and eat upon it. Nor has it ever been known that they filled the bellies of the poor, till they had previously satisfied their own. But in the election of magistrates the people seem to exceed all bounds: the merits of a candidate are often measured by the number of his treats; his constituents assemble, eat upon him, and lend their applause, not to his integrity or sense, but to the quantities of his beef and brandy.

And yet I could forgive this people their plentiful meals on this occasion, as it is extremely natural for every man to eat a great deal when he gets it for nothing; but what amazes me is, that all this good living no way contributes to improve their good humor. On the contrary, they seem to lose their temper as they lose their appetites; every morsel they swallow, and every glass they pour down, serves to increase their animosity. Many an honest man, before as harmless as a tame rabbit, when loaded with a single election dinner, has become more dangerous than a charged culverin. Upon one of these occasions I have actually seen a bloody-minded man-milliner sally forth at the head of a mob, determined to face a desperate pastry-cook, who was general of the opposite party.

But you must not suppose they are without a pretext for thus beating each other. On the contrary, no man here is so uncivilized as to beat his neighbor without producing very sufficient reasons. One candidate, for instance, treats with gin, a spirit of their own manufacture; another always drinks brandy, imported from abroad. Brandy is a wholesome liquor; gin, a liquor wholly their own. This, then, furnishes an obvious cause of quarrel,—Whether it be most reasonable to get drunk with gin, or get drunk with brandy? The mob meet upon the debate, fight themselves sober, and then draw off to get drunk again, and charge for another encounter. So that the English may now properly be said to be engaged in war; since, while they are subduing their enemies abroad, they are breaking each other's heads at home.

I lately made an excursion to a neighboring village, in order to be a spectator of the ceremonies practiced upon this occasion. I left town in company with three fiddlers, nine dozen of hams, and a corporation poet, which were designed as reinforcements to the gin-drinking party. We entered the town with a very good face; the fiddlers, no way intimidated by the enemy, kept handling their arms up the principal street. By this prudent manœuvre, they took peaceable possession of their headquarters, amid the shouts of multitudes, who seemed perfectly rejoiced at hearing their music, but above all at seeing their bacon.

I must own, I could not avoid being pleased to see all ranks of people, on this occasion, leveled into an equality, and the poor, in some measure, enjoying the primitive privileges of nature. If there was any distinction shown, the lowest of the people seemed to receive it from the rich. I could preceive a cobbler with a levee at his door, and a haberdasher giving audience from behind his counter.

But my reflections were soon interrupted by a mob, who demanded whether I was for the distillery or the brewery? As these were terms with which I was totally unacquainted, I chose at first to be silent; however, I know not what might have been the consequence of my reserve, had not the attention of the mob been called off to a skirmish between a brandy-drinker's cow and a gin-drinker's mastiff, which turned out, greatly to the satisfaction of the mob, in favor of the mastiff.

This spectacle, which afforded high entertainment, was at last ended by the appearance of one of the candidates, who came to harangue the mob: he made a very pathetic speech upon the late excessive importation of foreign drams, and the downfall of the distillery; I could see some of the audience shed tears. He was accompanied in his procession by Mrs. Deputy and Mrs. Mayoress. Mrs. Deputy was not in the least in liquor; and as for Mrs. Mayoress, one of the spectators assured me in my ear, that — she was a very fine woman before she had the smallpox.

Mixing with the crowd, I was now conducted to the hall where the magistrates are chosen: but what tongue can

describe this scene of confusion! the whole crowd seemed equally inspired with anger, jealousy, politics, patriotism, and punch. I remarked one figure that was carried up by two men upon this occasion. I at first began to pity his infirmities as natural, but soon found the fellow so drunk that he could not stand; another made his appearance to give his vote, but though he could stand, he actually lost the use of his tongue, and remained silent; a third, who, though excessively drunk, could both stand and speak, being asked the candidate's name for whom he voted, could be prevailed upon to make no other answer but "Tobacco and brandy." In short, an election hall seems to be a theatre, where every passion is seen without disguise; a school where fools may readily become worse, and where philosophers may gather wisdom.—Adieu.

LETTER XXXVII

FROM LIEN CHI ALTANGI TO FUM HOAM, FIRST PRESIDENT OF THE CEREMONIAL ACADEMY AT PEKIN IN CHINA

THE misfortunes of the great, my friend, are held up to engage our attention, are enlarged upon in tones of declamation, and the world is called upon to gaze at the noble sufferers: they have at once the comfort of admiration and pity.

Yet, where is the magnanimity of bearing misfortunes when the whole world is looking on? Men in such circumstances can act bravely even from motives of vanity. He only who in the vale of obscurity can brave adversity — who, without friends to encourage, acquaintances to pity, or even without hope to alleviate his distresses, can behave with tranquillity and indifference, is truly great: whether peasant or courtier, he deserves admiration, and should be held up for our imitation and respect.

The miseries of the poor are, however, entirely disregarded; though some undergo more real hardships in one day, than the great in their whole lives. It is indeed inconceivable what difficulties the meanest English sailor or

soldier endures without murumring or regret. Every day to him is a day of misery, and yet he bears his hard fate without repining.

With what indignation do I hear the heroes of tragedy complain of misfortunes and hardships, whose greatest calamity is founded in arrogance and pride! Their severest distresses are pleasures compared to what many of the adventuring poor every day sustain, without murmuring. These may eat, drink, and sleep; have slaves to attend them, and are sure of subsistence for life; while many of their fellow-creatures are obliged to wander, without a friend to comfort or to assist them, find enmity in every law, and are too poor to obtain even justice.

I have been led into these reflections from accidentally meeting, some days ago, a poor fellow begging at one of the outlets of this town, with a wooden leg. I was curious to learn what had reduced him to his present situation; and, after giving him what I thought proper, desired to know the history of his life and misfortunes, and the manner in which he was reduced to his present distress. The disabled soldier, for such he was, with an intrepidity truly British, leaning on his crutch, put himself into an attitude to comply with my request, and gave me his history as follows: —

"As for misfortunes, sir, I cannot pretend to have gone through more than others. Except the loss of my limb, and my being obliged to beg, I don't know any reason, thank Heaven, that I have to complaiu: there are some who have lost both legs and an eye; but, thank Heaven, it is not quite so bad with me.

"My father was a laborer in the country, and died when I was five years old; so I was put upon the parish. As he had been a wandering sort of man, the parishioners were not able to tell to what parish I belonged, or where I was born; so they sent me to another parish, and that parish sent me to a third: till at last it was thought I belonged to no parish at all. At length, however, they fixed me. I had some disposition to be a scholar, and had actually learned my letters; but the master of the workhouse put me to business as soon as I was able to handle a mallet.

"Here I lived an easy kind of a life for five years. I only wrought ten hours in the day, and had my meat and drink provided for my labor. It is true, I was not suffered to stir far from the house, for fear I should run away: but what of that? I had the liberty of the whole house, and the yard before the door, and that was enough for me.

"I was next bound out to a farmer, where I was up both early and late; but I ate and drank well, and liked my business well enough, till he died. Being then obliged to provide for myself, I was resolved to go and seek my fortune. Thus I lived, and went from town to town, working when I could get employment, and starving when I could get none, and might have lived so still; but happening one day to go through a field belonging to a magistrate, I spied a hare crossing the path just before me. I believe the devil put it in my head to fling my stick at it: well, what will you have on't? I killed the hare, and was bringing it away in triumph, when the Justice himself met me: he called me a villain, and collaring me, desired I would give an account of myself. I began immediately to give a full account of all that I knew of my breed, seed, and generation; but though I gave a very long account, the Justice said I could give no account of myself; so I was indicted, and found guilty of being poor, and sent to Newgate, in order to be transported to the plantations.

"People may say this and that of being in goal; but, for my part, I found Newgate as agreeable a place as ever I was in in all my life. I had my bellyfull to eat and drink, and did no work; but, alas! this kind of life was too good to last forever. I was taken out of prison, after five months, put on board of a ship, and sent off with two hundred more. Our passage was but indifferent, for we were all confined in the hold, and died very fast, for want of sweet air and provisions: but, for my part, I did not want meat, because I had a fever all the way: Providence was kind; when provisions grew short, it took away my desire of eating. When we came ashore, we were sold to the planters. I was bound for seven years, and as I was no scholar — for I had forgot my letters — I was obliged

to work among the negroes; and served out my time, as in duty bound to do.

"When my time was expired, I worked my passage home, and glad I was to see old England again, because I loved my country. O liberty! liberty! liberty! that is the property of every Englishman, and I will die in its defense. I was afraid, however, that I should be indicted for a vagabond once more; so I did not much care to go into the country, but kept about town; and did little jobs when I could get them. I was very happy in this manner for some time; till one evening, coming home from work, two men knocked me down, and then desired me to stand still. They belonged to a press-gang: I was carried before the Justice, and as I could give no account of myself (that was the thing that always hobbled me), I had my choice left, whether to go on board a man-of-war, or list for a soldier. I chose to be a soldier; and in this post of a gentleman I served two campaigns in Flanders, was at the battles of Val and Fontenoy, and received but one wound through the breast, which is troublesome to this day.

"When the peace came on, I was discharged; and as I could not work, because my wound was sometimes painful, I listed for a landman in the East India Company's service. I here fought the French in six pitched battles; and verily believe, that if I could read and write, our captain would have given me promotion, and made me a corporal. But that was not my good fortune; I soon fell sick, and when I became good for nothing, got leave to return home again with forty pounds in my pocket, which I saved in the service. This was at the beginning of the present war, so I hoped to be set on shore, and to have the pleasure of spending my money; but the government wanted men, and I was pressed again, before ever I could set foot on shore.

"The boatswain found me, as he said, an obstinate fellow: he swore that I understood my business perfectly well, but that I shammed Abraham merely to be idle. God knows, I knew nothing of sea business: he beat me without considering what he was about. But still my forty pounds was some comfort to me under every beating: the money was my comfort, and the money I might have had

to this day, but that our ship was taken by the French, and so I lost it all.

"Our crew was carried into a French prison, and many of them died, because they were not used to live in a gaol; but, for my part, it was nothing to me, for I was seasoned. One night, however, as I was sleeping on a bed of boards, with a warm blanket about me (for I always loved to lie well), I was awakened by the boatswain, who had a dark lantern in his hand. 'Jack,' says he to me, 'will you knock out the French sentry's brains?'—'I don't care,' says I, striving to keep myself awake, 'if I lend a hand.'—'Then follow me,' says he, 'and I hope we shall do business.' So up I got, and tied my blanket, which was all the clothes I had, about my middle, and went with him to fight the Frenchmen. We had no arms; but one Englishman is able to beat five Frenchmen at any time; so we went down to the door, where both the sentries were posted, and, rushing upon them, seized their arms in a moment, and knocked them down. From thence nine of us ran together to the quay, and seizing the first boat we met, got out of the harbor, and put to sea. We had not been here three days before we were taken up by an English privateer, who was glad of so many good hands; and we consented to run our chance. However, we had not so much luck as we expected. In three days we fell in with a French man-of-war, of forty guns, while we had but twenty-three; so to it we went. The fight lasted for three hours, and I verily believe we should have taken the Frenchman, but unfortunately we lost almost all our men, just as we were going to get the victory. I was once more in the power of the French, and I believe it would have gone hard with me, had I been brought back to my old gaol in Brest; but, by good fortune, we were retaken, and carried to England once more.

"I had almost forgot to tell you, that in this last engagement I was wounded in two places,—I lost four fingers of the left hand, and my leg was shot off. Had I had the good fortune to have lost my leg and use of my hand on board a king's ship, and not a privateer, I should have been entitled to clothing and maintenance during the

rest of my life; but that was not my chance: one man is born with a silver spoon in his mouth, and another with a wooden ladle. However, blessed be God, I enjoy good health, and have no enemy in this world that I know of, but the French and the Justice of Peace."

Thus saying, he limped off, leaving my friend and me in admiration of his intrepidity and content; nor could we avoid acknowledging, that an habitual acquaintance with misery is the truest school of fortitude and philosophy.—Adieu.

LETTER XXXVIII

To the Same

The titles of European princes are rather more numerous than ours of Asia, but by no means so sublime. The king of Visapour or Pegu, not satisfied with claiming the globe and all its appurtenances to him and his heirs, asserts a property even in the firmament, and extends his orders to the milky way. The monarchs of Europe, with more modesty, confine their titles to earth, but make up by number what is wanting in their sublimity. Such is their passion for a long list of these splendid trifles, that I have known a German prince with more titles than subjects, and a Spanish nobleman with more names than shirts.

Contrary to this, "the English monarchs," says a writer of the last century, "disdain to accept of such titles, which tend only to increase their pride, without improving their glory; they are above depending on the feeble helps of heraldry for respect, perfectly satisfied with the consciousness of acknowledged power." At present, however, these maxims are laid aside; the English monarchs have of late assumed new titles, and have impressed their coins with the names and arms of obscure dukedoms, petty states, and subordinate employments. Their design in this, I make no doubt, was laudably to add new lustre to the British throne; but, in reality, paltry claims only serve to diminish that respect they are designed to secure.

There is in the honors assumed by kings, as in the decorations of architecture, a majestic simplicity, which best conduces to inspire our reverence and respect; numerous and trifling ornaments in either are strong indications of meanness in the designer, or of concealed deformity. Should, for instance, the emperor of China, among other titles, assume that of deputy mandarin of Maccau; or the monarch of Great Britain, France, and Ireland, desire to be acknowledged as Duke of Brentford, Lunenburg, or Lincoln; the observer revolts at this mixture of important and paltry claims, and forgets the emperor in his familiarity with the duke or the deputy.

I remember a similar instance of this inverted ambition in the illustrious king of Manacabo, upon his first treaty with the Portuguese. Among the presents that were made him by the ambassador of that nation was a sword, with a brass hilt, which he seemed to set a peculiar value upon. This he thought too great an acquisition to his glory to be forgotten among the number of his titles. He therefore gave orders, that his subjects should style him for the future, Talipot, the immortal potentate of Manacabo, Messenger of the Morning, Enlightener of the Sun, Possessor of the whole Earth, and mighty Monarch of the Brass-handled Sword.

This method of mixing majestic and paltry titles, of quartering the arms of a great empire and an obscure province upon the same medal here, had its rise in the virtuous partiality of their late monarchs. Willing to testify an affection to their native country, they gave its name and ensigns a place upon their coins, and thus in some measure ennobled its obscurity. It was, indeed, but just, that a people which had given England up their king, should receive some honorary equivalent in return; but at present these motives are no more: England has now a monarch wholly British; and it has some reason to hope for British titles upon British coins.

However, were the money of England designed to circulate in Germany, there would be no flagrant impropriety in impressing it with German names and arms; but though this might have been so upon former occasions, I am told

there is no danger of it for the future. As England, therefore, designs to keep back its gold, I candidly think Lunenburg, Oldenburg, and the rest of them, may very well keep back their titles.

It is a mistaken prejudice in princes to think that a number of loud-sounding names can give new claims to respect. The truly great have ever disdained them. When Timur the Lame had conquered Asia, an orator by profession came to compliment him upon the occasion. He began his harangue by styling him the most omnipotent and the most glorious object of the creation. The emperor seemed displeased with his paltry adulation; yet still he went on, complimenting him as the most mighty, the most valiant, and the most perfect of beings. "Hold there, my friend," cries the lame emperor, "hold there, till I have got another leg." In fact, the feeble or the despotic alone find pleasure in multiplying these pageants of vanity; but strength and freedom have nobler aims, and often find the finest adulation in majestic simplicity.

The young monarch of this country has already testified a proper contempt for several unmeaning appendages on royalty; cooks and scullions have been obliged to quit their fires; gentlemen's gentlemen, and the whole tribe of necessary people who did nothing, have been dismissed from further services. A youth who can thus bring back simplicity and frugality to a court, will soon probably have a true respect for his own glory; and while he has dismissed all useless employments, may disdain to accept of empty or degrading titles.—Adieu.

LETTER XXXIX

To the Same

Whenever I attempt to characterize the English in general, some unforeseen difficulties constantly occur to disconcert my design; I hesitate between censure and praise. When I consider them as a reasoning, philosophical people, they have my applause; but when I

reverse the medal, and observe their inconstancy and irresolution, I can scarcely persuade myself that I am observing the same people.

Yet, upon examination, this very inconstancy, so remarkable here, flows from no other source than their love of reasoning. The man who examines a complicated subject on every side, and calls in reason to his assistance, will frequently change; will find himself distracted by opposing improbabilities and contending proofs; every alteration of place will diversify the prospect, will give some latent argument new force, and contribute to maintain an anarchy in the mind.

On the contrary, they who never examine with their own reason act with more simplicity. Ignorance is positive, instinct perseveres, and the human being moves in safety within the narrow circle of brutal uniformity. What is true with regard to individuals, is not less so when applied to states. A reasoning government like this is in continual fluctuation, while those kingdoms where men are taught not to controvert, but obey, continue always the same. In Asia, for instance, where the monarch's authority is supported by force, and acknowledged through fear, a change of government is entirely unknown. All the inhabitants seem to wear the same mental complexion, and remain contented with hereditary oppression. The sovereign's pleasure is the ultimate rule of duty; every branch of the administration is a perfect epitome of the whole; and if one tyrant is deposed, another starts up in his room to govern as his predecessor. The English, on the contrary, instead of being led by power, endeavor to guide themselves by reason: instead of appealing to the pleasure of the prince, appeal to the original rights of mankind. What one rank of men assert, is denied by others, as the reasons on opposite sides happen to come home with greater or less conviction. The people of Asia are directed by precedent, which never alters; the English by reason, which is ever changing its appearance.

The disadvantages of an Asiatic government, acting in this manner by precedent, are evident: original errors are thus continued, without hopes of redress; and all marks of

genius are leveled down to one standard, since no superiority of thinking can be allowed its exertion in mending obvious defects. But to recompense those defects, their governments undergo no new alterations; they have no new evils to fear, nor no fermentations in the constitution that continue; the struggle for power is soon over, and all becomes tranquil as before; they are habituated to subordination, and men are taught to form no other desires than those which they are allowed to satisfy.

The disadvantages of a government acting from the immediate influence of reason, like that of England, are not less than those of the former. It is extremely difficult to induce a number of free beings to co-operate for their mutual benefit; every possible advantage will necessarily be sought, and every attempt to procure it must be attended with a new fermentation; various reasons will lead different ways, and equity and advantage will often be outbalanced by a combination of clamor and prejudice. But though such a people may be thus in the wrong, they have been influenced by a happy delusion; their errors are seldom seen till they are felt; each man is himself the tyrant he has obeyed, and such a master he can easily forgive. The disadvantages he feels may, in reality, be equal to what is felt in the most despotic government; but man will bear every calamity with patience when he knows himself to be the author of his own misfortunes.—Adieu.

LETTER XL

To the Same

My long residence here begins to fatigue me. As every object ceases to be new, it no longer continues to be pleasing: some minds are so fond of variety, that pleasure itself, if permanent, would be insupportable, and we are thus obliged to solicit new happiness even by courting distress. I only, therefore, wait the arrival of my son to vary this trifling scene, and borrow new pleasure from danger and fatigue. A life, I own, thus spent in

wandering from place to place is at best but empty dissipation. But to pursue trifles is the lot of humanity: and whether we bustle in a pantomime, or strut at a coronation; whether we shout at a bonfire, or harangue in a senate-house; whatever object we follow, it will at last surely conduct us to futility and disappointment. The wise bustle and laugh as they walk in the pageant, but fools bustle and are important; and this probably is all the difference between them.

This may be an apology for the levity of my former correspondence; I talked of trifles, and I knew that they were trifles: to make the things of this life ridiculous, it is only sufficient to call them by their names.

In other respects, I have omitted several striking circumstances in the description of this country, as supposing them either already known to you, or as not being thoroughly known to myself; but there is one omission for which I expect no forgiveness, namely, my being totally silent upon their buildings, roads, rivers, and mountains. This is a branch of science on which all other travelers are so very prolix, that my deficiency will appear the more glaring. With what pleasure, for instance, do some read of a traveler in Egypt measuring a fallen column with his cane, and finding it exactly five feet nine inches long; of his creeping through the mouth of a catacomb, and coming out by a different hole from that he entered; of his stealing the finger of an antique statue, in spite of the janizary that watched him; or his adding a new conjecture to the hundred and fourteen conjectures already published upon the names of Osiris and Isis.

Methinks I hear some of my friends in China demanding a similar account of London and the adjacent villages; and if I remain here much longer, it is probable I may gratify their curiosity. I intend, when run dry on other topics, to take a serious survey of the city wall; to describe that beautiful building the mansion-house; I will enumerate the magnificent squares in which the nobility chiefly reside, and the royal palaces appointed for the reception of the English monarch; nor will I forget the beauties of Shoe Lane, in which I myself have resided since my arrival.

You shall find me no way inferior to many of my brother travelers in the arts of description. At present, however, as a specimen of this way of writing, I send you a few hasty remarks, collected in a late journey I made to Kentish Town, and this in the manner of modern voyagers.

"Having heard much of Kentish Town, I conceived a strong desire to see that celebrated place. I could have wished, indeed, to satisfy my curiosity without going thither; but that was impracticable, and therefore I resolved to go. Travelers have two methods of going to Kentish Town,—they take coach, which costs ninepence, or they may go afoot, which costs nothing: in my opinion, a coach is by far the most eligible convenience, but I was resolved to go on foot, having considered with myself, that going in that manner would be the cheapest way.

"As you set out from Dog-house bar, you enter upon a fine level road railed in on both sides, commanding on the right a small prospect of groves and fields, enameled with flowers, which would wonderfully charm the sense of smelling, were it not for a dunghill on the left, which mixes its effluvia with their odors. This dunghill is of much greater antiquity than the road; and I must not omit a piece of injustice I was going to commit upon this occasion. My indignation was leveled against the makers of the dunghill, for having brought it so near the road; whereas, it should have fallen upon the makers of the road, for having brought that so near the dunghill.

"After proceeding in this manner for some time, a building, resembling somewhat a triumphal arch, salutes the traveler's view. This structure, however, is peculiar to this country, and vulgarly called a turnpike-gate: I could perceive a long inscription, in large characters, on the front, probably upon the occasion of some triumph, but, being in haste, I left it to be made out by some subsequent adventurer who may happen to travel this way; so, continuing my course to the west, I soon arrived at an unwalled town, called Islington.

"Islington is a pretty neat town, mostly built of brick, with a church and bells; it has a small lake, or rather pond, in the midst, though at present very much neg-

lected. I am told it is dry in summer: if this be the case, it can be no very proper receptacle for fish; of which the inhabitants themselves seem sensible, by bringing all that is eaten there from London.

"After having surveyed the curiosities of this fair and beautiful town, I proceeded forward, leaving a fair stone building, called the White Conduit House, on my right. Here the inhabitants of London often assemble to celebrate a feast of hot rolls and butter: seeing such numbers, each with their little tables before them, employed on this occasion, must, no doubt, be a very amusing sight to the looker-on, but still more so to those who perform in the solemnity.

"From hence I parted with reluctance to Pancras, as it is written, or Pancridge, as it is pronounced; but which should be both pronounced and written Pangrace: this emendation I will venture *meo arbitrio*: παν, in the Greek language, signifies ALL, which, added to the English word GRACE, maketh ALL GRACE, or PANGRACE; and, indeed, this is a very proper appellation to a place of so much sanctity as Pangrace is universally esteemed. However this be, if you except the parish church and its fine bells, there is little in Pangrace worth the attention of the curious observer.

"From Pangrace to Kentish Town is an easy journey of one mile and a quarter: the road lies through a fine champaign country, well watered with beautiful drains, and enameled with flowers of all kinds, which might contribute to charm every sense, were it not that the odoriferous gales are often more impregnated with dust than perfume.

"As you enter Kentish Town, the eye is at once presented with the shops of artificers, such as venders of candles, small coal, and hair brooms; there are also several august buildings of red brick, with numberless sign posts, or rather pillars, in a peculiar order of architecture. I send you a drawing of several — *vide* A B C. This pretty town probably borrows its name from its vicinity to the county of Kent; and, indeed, it is not unnatural that it should, as there are only London and the adjacent villages that lie between them. Be this as it will, perceiving night approach, I made a hasty repast on roasted mutton and a

certain dried fruit called potatoes, resolving to protract my remarks upon my return; and this I would very willingly have done, but was prevented by a circumstance which, in truth, I had for some time foreseen, for night coming on, it was impossible to take a proper survey of the country, as I was obliged to return home in the dark."— Adieu.

LETTER XLI

To the Same

After a variety of disappointments, my wishes are at length fully satisfied. My son, so long expected, is arrived; at once, by his presence, banishing my anxiety, and opening a new scene of unexpected pleasure. His improvements in mind and person have far surpassed even the sanguine expectations of a father. I left him a boy, but he is returned a man; pleasing in his person, hardened by travel, and polished by adversity. His disappointment in love, however, had infused an air of melancholy into his conversation, which seemed at intervals to interrupt our mutual satisfaction. I expected that this could find a cure only from time; but fortune, as if willing to load us with her favors, has, in a moment, repaid every uneasiness with rapture.

Two days after his arrival the Man in Black, with his beautiful niece, came to congratulate us upon this pleasing occasion; but guess our surprise, when my friend's lovely kinswoman was found to be the very captive my son had rescued from Persia, and who had been wrecked on the Wolga, and was carried by the Russian peasants to the port of Archangel. Were I to hold the pen of a novelist, I might be prolix in describing their feelings at so unexpected an interview; but you may conceive their joy without my assistance: words were unable to express their transports; then how can words describe it?

When two young persons are sincerely enamored of each other, nothing can give me such pleasure as seeing them married: whether I know the parties or not, I am happy

at thus binding one link more in the universal chain. Nature has, in some measure, formed me for a match-maker, and given me a soul to sympathize with every mode of human felicity. I instantly, therefore, consulted the Man in Black, whether we might not crown their mutual wishes by marriage: his soul seems formed of similar materials with mine; he instantly gave his consent, and the next day was appointed for the solemnization of their nuptials.

All the acquaintances which I had made since my arrival were present at this gay solemnity. The little Beau was constituted master of the ceremonies, and his wife, Mrs. Tibbs, conducted the entertainment with proper decorum. The Man in Black and the pawnbroker's widow were very sprightly and tender upon this occasion. The widow was dressed up under the direction of Mrs. Tibbs; and as for her lover, his face was set off by the assistance of a pigtail wig, which was lent by the little Beau, to fit him for making love with proper formality. The whole company easily perceived that it would be a double wedding before all was over, and, indeed, my friend and the widow seemed to make no secret of their passion; he even called me aside, in order to know my candid opinion, whether I did not think him a little too old to be married. "As for my own part," continued he, "I know I am going to play the fool; but all my friends will praise my wisdom, and produce me as the very pattern of discretion to others."

At dinner everything seemed to run on with good humor, harmony, and satisfaction. Every creature in company thought themselves pretty, and every jest was laughed at. The Man in Black sat next his mistress, helped her plate, chimed her glass, and jogging her knees and her elbow, he whispered something arch in her ear, on which she patted his cheek: never was antiquated passion so playful, so harmless, and amusing, as between this reverend couple.

The second course was now called for, and, among a variety of other dishes, a fine turkey was placed before the widow. The Europeans, you know, carve as they eat; my friend, therefore, begged his mistress to help him to a part of the turkey. The widow, pleased with an opportunity of

showing her skill in carving (an art upon which it seems she piqued herself), began to cut it up by first taking off the leg. "Madam," cries my friend, "if I might be permitted to advise, I would begin by cutting off the wing, and then the leg will come off more easily."—"Sir," replies the widow, "give me leave to understand cutting up a fowl: I always begin with the leg."—"Yes, madam," replies the lover; "but if the wing be the most convenient manner, I would begin with the wing."—"Sir," interrupts the lady, "when you have fowls of your own, begin with the wing if you please, but give me leave to take off the leg; I hope I am not to be taught at this time of day."—"Madam," interrupts he, "we are never too old to be instructed."—"Old, sir!" interrupts the other; "who is old, sir? when I die of age, I know of some that will quake for fear. If the leg does not come off, take the turkey to yourself."—"Madam," replied the Man in Black, "I don't care a farthing whether the leg or the wing comes off; if you are for the leg first, why, you shall have the argument, even though it be as I say."—"As for the matter of that," cries the widow, "I don't care a fig whether you are for the leg off or on: and, friend, for the future keep your distance."—"Oh," replied the other, "that is easily done; it is only removing to the other end of the table; and so, madam, your most obedient humble servant."

Thus was this courtship of an age destroyed in one moment; for this dialogue effectually broke off the match between this respectable couple, that had been but just concluded. The smallest accidents disappoint the most important treaties. However, though it in some measure interrupted the general satisfaction, it no ways lessened the happiness of the youthful couple; and, by the young lady's looks, I could perceive she was not entirely displeased with this interruption.

In a few hours the whole transaction seemed entirely forgotten, and we have all since enjoyed those satisfactions which result from a consciousness of making each other happy. My son and his fair partner are fixed here for life: the Man in Black has given them up a small estate in the country, which, added to what I was able to bestow, will be

capable of supplying all the real, but not the fictitious, demands of happiness. As for myself, the world being but one city to me, I do not much care in which of the streets I happen to reside: I shall, therefore, spend the remainder of my days in examining the manners of different countries, and have prevailed upon the Man in Black to be my companion. "They must often change," says Confucius, "who would be constant in happiness or wisdom."—Adieu.

END OF THE CITIZEN OF THE WORLD.

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